

TWO Daughters of One Race.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT,

Author of "Women Must Weep," "Social Silhouettes," "An Ambitious Woman," "A New York Family," "A Gentleman of Leisure," etc.

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AUGUST, 1897

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

TWO DAUGHTERS OF ONE RACE

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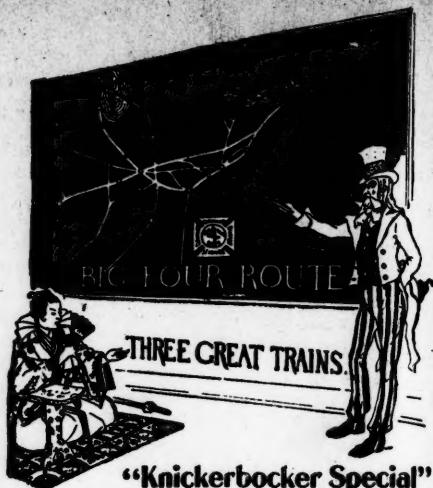
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BY

EDGAR FAWCETT,

AUTHOR OF "WOMEN MUST WEEP," "SOCIAL SILHOUETTES," "AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN," "A NEW YORK FAMILY," "A GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE," ETC., ETC.

We were two daughters of one race ;
She was the fairest in the face.

TENNYSON.

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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

AUGUST, 1897.

TWO DAUGHTERS OF ONE RACE.

I.

IN our sweet, rolling Westchester country, five miles at least from the lovely township of Rye and still farther from the sprawling little city of Port Chester, for generations the Garretsons had owned a large, rambling homestead, well back inland beyond the blue sweep of the Sound. Through latter years the Garretsons had often stayed away from Widewood, as it was almost historically called. They had possessed it before the Revolution, and afterward Washington had indisputably slept in one of its chambers. If they had been an English family, some social observer had rather recently said of them, "they would by this time have stood high up in the peerage,—even as dukes, perhaps,—with all that ancestry of generals, majors, famous lawyers and statesmen." But there was surely nothing ducal about Widewood. It was surrounded by many acres of charming yet uncultivated land. The lawns were spacious and usually well tended, but the house, though almost enormously large for an American country residence, had nothing more picturesque than the look of an overgrown New England dwelling, which touches of modern improvement had lamentably failed to improve. Still, in its scrappy, irregular wooden awkwardness, it suggested both culture and gentility, and gave decisive hints of the elegance and comfort which delightfully overflowed its interior apartments and halls.

For forty years past the Garretsons had never made it a permanent home. Some of them had lived abroad for long intervals. Then the big house, though always kept in thrifty repair, would remain closed at all seasons. The town-house of the family was in lower Fifth Avenue, not far from Washington Square. Often this, too, would be shut for many months; it was not particularly large, and was exceedingly old-fashioned; but, like Widewood, it had its marked interior charms.

At about the time of our civil war the reigning Garretsons, so to speak, numbered only two, Lewis Van Corlear Garretson, and his

attractive young wife, who had been a Miss Pinckney and an heiress of note. The Garretson family possessions were no longer important, and this marriage had been looked upon as a piece of the most felicitous luck for Lewis. Nevertheless it had been an ardent love-match on both sides, and for this reason the glad bridegroom smiled all the brighter when gratulations were showered upon him. He had not much ready money, and a swift succession of deaths among near relations had recently saddened his days. A large number of these had been passed in Europe. He was educated there, and at Nice, one winter, his beloved mother had suddenly expired. The shock soon afterward had killed his father, who had been for a long time past totally blind, and had relied upon his wife in the most pathetic and childish way. Lewis had come back to New York an excellent American, and only a few months after his brilliant alliance with Miss Pinckney had felt himself irresistibly called to fight in the rebellion among the Northern troops.

Who has forgotten his rapid promotion, his heroic exploits in more than one hot battle, and his untimely taking-off at Gettysburg after marvels of memorable courage? Some of those who knew her best believed Eleanor Garretson had got a blow that must kill. Perhaps this might have proved true but for the need of living to preserve another life. Her boy was born two months after General Garretson's death. She went abroad with him when he was about a year old, and he was more than seven by the time she returned with him to America. Certain unforgetting friends welcomed her with delight; but they found her strangely changed. The old blithesome image was blurred; you seemed to look at her through some indissoluble film of haze. Nothing except her fascination of manner remained just as it had been before. She had stared straight into the icy eyes of death, and read there the blank bereavement of an implacable future. Somehow no one ever spoke of her as marrying again. The passionate love that she bore little Roland seemed in itself to challenge the idea of her ever duplicating it toward brothers and sisters born of a new union. Besides, there stole into her look a certain hardness that made even the boldest suitor leave certain sentences unspoken,—and a pretty young widow, when known to have two millions or more of American dollars, will be apt to meet some decidedly bold suitors (blue-blooded into the bargain) as she wanders about the continent of Europe.

One day, in the old Fifth Avenue family house, Mrs. Garretson, who had been watching her son with much attention while the boy sat reading some juvenile book, suddenly exclaimed,—

“What is it, Roland? Do your eyes trouble you?”

“Yes, mamma.” Here Roland laughed, looking at her in surprise. “How funny that you should know! What did I do to make you find out?”

“You fluttered your eyelids, dear, and you moved your head back and forward queerly. Have you any pain?”

“Oh, no, mamma. But the letters of the book get small and dim every now and then. Then they grow all right again, and I can see them perfectly.”

Mrs. Garretson went to the boy, caught him in her arms, and drew him to one of the windows. For some time she searched the eyes upturned to her. They were a lucid gray, full of purplish shadows,—his father's in expression, her own in color. After a long scrutiny she kissed the boy and said,—

“No more reading to-day, Roland. You are going out in the carriage with mamma to see a doctor who knows a great deal about people's eyes, and who will tell us what we should do to prevent that dimness of sight.”

Hardly an hour afterward she was in the private office of a famous New York oculist, and saying to him, while Roland waited in an adjoining room, well out of hearing distance,—

“His grandfather was stricken with blindness quite suddenly, and remained blind for a number of years,—indeed, till the hour of his death. And I have also heard that there have been other like cases, a long time ago, in the Garretson family.”

The oculist had been making a very close examination of Roland's eyes, subjecting the lad to certain practical experiments and observing their result with deepest vigilance.

“It is undoubtedly a weakness of the optic nerve,” he said.

“And . . . so . . . very serious, you think?” faltered the mother.

“My dear madam,” was the reply, “when these things occur at all there is always a certain amount of danger—”

“Danger? Yes?”

“—But when they occur in youth there may always be a very large amount of hope. You tell me that your son is already unusually advanced in his studies. So much the better. I should advise abandonment of books for certainly six months to come. Dismiss the tutors that you speak of as now instructing him. Or, if they continue their duties, let their lessons take an entirely oral form. Meanwhile I will watch and treat the case very carefully, with your sanction, and shall expect to give you good reports within the next month.”

Mrs. Garretson, in her anxiety and foreboding, wholly failed to sleep that night. But through the feverish tedium of her insomnia pierced an incessant consoling thought: “After all, if it did come, how much better still to have him that way than to lose him outright!—my idol, my all in life!”

II.

Roland's malady, abruptly developed, did not abate, for two good months, in the least appreciable way. It did not increase, however, but merely remained an ominous and stubborn presence. Mrs. Garretson at length made up her mind to consult a man in Berlin, of prodigious distinction, and so again departed for foreign shores.

Whether or no the celebrated German effected Roland's cure it would be hard to decide. Youth and nature were perhaps in quiet copartnership all the time, as secret rivals of the most skilled prac-

titioners his mother could possibly consult. After a year he was enabled to resume his studies. Prepared for college abroad, he entered Harvard at seventeen, and made there a good record if not a rare one. During these four years of discipleship Mrs. Garretson rented a house at Cambridge, quite near the university. Roland had soon made certain warm friends at Harvard, none of them in the easy-going or dissipated sets. She greatly enjoyed receiving these on the most hospitable terms. She would preside at little dinners, and now and then large ones, where the conversation often gave her keen pleasure, in its piquancy, refinement, and intellectual push. Its ideas not seldom struck her as amusingly immature, for she was a woman whose fine intelligence had never been allowed to rust through lack of reading, and her tranquil life, notwithstanding its varied experiences of travel, had long stayed unjarred by the vacuous clatter of what we term "general society." She had an almost tragic desire to keep pace with the youthful canter of Roland's wakening enthusiasms. These were plentiful, though nearly all literary. She already knew that in a vague way he aspired to be a "writer," and she trembled a little at the laudation which some of his classmates had bestowed upon compositions whose faults she detected and whose merits she strove to regard with disciplined and impartial favor. "Vain task!" her maternal heart sometimes told itself. "How can I like what he does that I believe good and sound as I would like what somebody else has done of an equal merit? Pride and love must, of course, work their will, and I fear that I shall prove, after all, his worst and least trustworthy critic."

Of all her son's college friends she liked Graham Heath the best. He came of old New York stock, and she cared for him none the less on this account. Once it had been said of this young man, while yet a mere boy, that he would inherit a great property and be one of the chief *partis* of his period. But disaster had come to the famed bank of which his father was head, and at fourteen Graham found himself an orphan with hardly four thousand a year. Still, he never dreamed of repining, and once he had affirmed, with a quick slant of the head and a meaning tension of the nostrils,—

"I used to feel, as a youngster, that I was no end of a swell. But I shouldn't like to feel that way now. It would be horribly hampering. I don't see how a fellow can have much harder work on his hands than a whole lifetime of idleness."

"Bravo, Graham!" said Mrs. Garretson, who chanced, just then, to enter that room of her Cambridge home in which Roland and his friend were loungingly seated. "I love to hear you speak such wise words." She laid a hand on either of Roland's shoulders after he had risen; she had to reach up considerably in doing so; it struck her that he grew taller every day.

Roland's eyes laughed into hers. He seemed to divine her thoughts. "Oh, mother," he said, "riches don't spell laziness, or ruin either. Besides, I haven't any money, have I? Isn't it all yours?"

"By no means all. But mine and yours are ever the same," she said, fondly. A light seemed flung, for a second, on the oval of her pale, sweet, pensive face.

"As if I didn't know it, mammy!" And Roland ducked his head a trifle clumsily, kissing one of the slim white hands on his shoulder.

"It isn't in Roland to be idle, Mrs. Garretson," said Graham Heath, with emphasis. "And he's going to do splendid things as an author. Literature, luckily, will be his walking-stick and not his crutch. That's what will give him his magnificent opportunity. He can afford to write a page a week, and at the end of the month tear his four pages up and spend another month in rewriting them from memory, with marvels of artistic alteration."

"The *maladie de perfection*," smiled Roland, "as the French call it. Yes, if I'm anything in any species of exertion I suppose it will be a plodder."

"You've a dreamy temperament," Heath assented. "You're like a piece of land with plenty of subterranean fire but no active volcanic craters. Now, *I*—" And there he paused.

"What career have *you* planned for yourself, Graham?" asked Mrs. Garretson, in very interested tones; for this fair, slender fellow, with his keen-cut face, rippled flaxen locks, prominent brow, and restless yet decisive bearing, pleased her as much by the promise as by the vigor of both his opinions and his personality.

Graham folded his arms and looked out of a large window near him, that gave a broad view of the flat Cambridge lowlands, with their clusters of prim wooden dwellings and their marginal Charles, loved by Longfellow and Lowell, curving its ruffled indigo beneath a breezy spring afternoon.

"Is it really to be a physician's calling?" gently persisted the lady. "Haven't you yet changed your mind?"

"No and yes," Graham answered, loiteringly. "I see, since I last spoke with you on that point, Mrs. Garretson, how specialties are now crowding the general practitioner to the wall. I" (he hesitated, glancing at Roland)—"I've been thinking very seriously of a certain specialty."

"Which?" asked Mrs. Garretson.

"The eye,—the human eye."

"Ah," said the lady, quickly. She, too, looked at Roland, and a surge of dismal memories flooded her thought. "It should be a wonderfully appealing kind of work," she went on, her air missing none of its wonted suavity and cheer. "The rewards to one humane and compassionate would sometimes be priceless. Think of gaining the power to rescue a fellow-creature, every now and then, from the doom of life-long blindness!" Again her gaze instinctively stole toward Roland. "And, my dear Graham," she pursued, "had you thought of taking a course in ophthalmologic studies immediately on graduation?"

"Not here."

"Oh, abroad, then?"

"In Berlin,—yes. They've a great man there at the university,—Dr. Heinrich Gottlieb."

"Dr. Heinrich Gottlieb!" exclaimed Mrs. Garretson. "Ah, yes, he is amazingly skilful. I—I had occasion to consult him once. It's a long time ago." She hated all reference to that crucial time, and went on, unexplainingly: "Such a gnomish man to look at, almost

broader than he is long, with flamy eyes and a snow-white bush of beard."

"Oh, that is the old doctor," said Graham,—"or was. He's dead, you know, and his son has taken his place in Berlin. Even more than that. The present Dr. Gottlieb is said to have advanced far beyond his father in certain directions."

"Just as Dr. Graham Heath is going, some day, to advance far beyond *him*," cried Roland, in affectionate prophecy. "I perfectly remember that queer old fellow at Berlin. Mother took me to him for my eyes. They're strong enough now. What was the matter with them then, mammy?"

"Oh, nothing important, my boy. It soon disappeared."

When, after graduation, Graham Heath went to Germany, the Garretsons accompanied him. In Berlin the young men parted, one to commence his new course of ocular studies, the other to launch upon a series of Byronic wanderings.

"I alone prevent you from being romantic," said his mother. "You let me go with you from Greece to Norway; and there's nothing poetic in such restlessness when a middle-aged mother shares it."

"You're not yet middle-aged," Roland contradicted. "And, besides, every hint of romanticism has been taken away from such journeys as ours. Byron, if he were alive to-day, would be called a globe-trotter, and would recognize the superior wisdom of supplying himself with Cook's tickets, even if he did not deign to join any of the personally conducted parties."

They were in Florence, walking on the Lung' Arno della Zecca, as Roland spoke. Nearly five years had passed since they had said good-by to Graham Heath. It was a perfect April day, and in Florence that means much. Over this enchanted valley burned a lapis-lazuli sky. Fiesole was a mistless violet, and the manifold villas along her slopes looked like a shower of pale blossoms flung there broadcast. Northward the Apennines, with Vallombrosa embosomed among them, showed a few delicate scrolls and arabesques of still unmelted snow. The bronze David loomed clear-cut from its Piazzale di Michelangelo, and the façade of San Miniato flashed golden above tapering cypresses.

Just then a tall man, with sunken cheeks and a yellow beard so trimmed that it made a broom-shaped protuberance from his chin, crossed the street and addressed Roland. A young girl (presumably his daughter) lingered behind him, in garb too showy and yet by no means tasteless.

"Excuse me, sir," said the man, with a great, kindly, sociable grin, "but would you 'blige me by lettin' me know the shortest way to the Oofizzer Palace?"

"You're very near it now," answered Roland, in whom love of country was, just then, not precisely a dominant passion. And with polite brevity he gave the full needed directions.

"Thanky, sir,—thanky very much. Fact is, I been nearly all over It'ly two or three times afore, but somehow I 'ain't never struck this 'ere city. I know Rome, and Vennus, and lots of other places,

but somethin's always happened, don't ye see, to keep me away from Flor'nce. Thanky, sir. Good-day to ye."

Roland unconsciously touched his hat, but he got only a vigorous nod or two in return.

Meanwhile Mrs. Garretson had slipped across the street and was making purchases at an odorous and colorful flower-stand, rich in daffodils, carnations, hyacinths, and sprays of the same white lilies which Carlo Dolci put into the hand of his Annunciation Angel, at the Pitti Palace.

"You see," said Roland, while they presently moved onward, "our interesting fellow-countryman is perhaps quite as familiar with the Nile as with the Mississippi,—with the Black Sea as with Lake Michigan. It's all very prosaic, but I suppose it is equally proper. He has just as much right to his 'It'ly' and his 'Oofizzer' as you and I have. Only, he exemplifies my assertion about the present triteness of all European travel. And he does cast a blight on lovely and memorable things; there's no denying that."

"My dear Roland, so did the lack of railroads and all decent modes of conveyance, in Byron's or Shelley's time, I haven't a doubt. Imagine making the grand tour in stage-coaches! No; give me swarms of the vulgarest and most irreverent Cook's tourists, rather than those wretched inns and lumbering vehicles of the past. Besides, he's no worse than 'Arry and 'Arriet, and not half so bad as certain Germans at the *tables-d'hôte*, who make bibs of their napkins and shovel six or seven courses into their mouths with the sole assistance of their knives. Your recent acquaintance, by the way, might be of some literary use to you."

"No, thanks. His portrait is too familiar in American fiction. I prefer, as you know, the unusual and the unhackneyed."

"You're fatally fastidious, I fear. Cleverer people than I have told you so, Roland,—people both in London and Paris. True, my boy, you've written two novels in five years that have distinctly made their mark."

"Really?" said Roland, a little wearily; "it seems to me that they have both fallen very flat indeed."

"Not among the best judges,—not among the wiser elect. And the chapters you have read me from this new story impress me as teeming with signs of the most vital advancement. You are plainly deepening no longer; you had already deepened quite enough. Now you are broadening, and that is just what I had begun to despair of your doing."

"Ah," sighed Roland, with a mournful lifting of his fine dark eyebrows, "here, of all places, one might so easily despair of achieving the true elemental equipoise which makes any work of art endurable and enduring. Take, for example, certain masterpieces of painting or sculpture here, which you cannot criticise except by admiring."

They had passed into the long, narrow passage, flanked by separate walls, of the immense Uffizi, with porticos between the pillars of their dusky lower colonnades, and in every portico a life-size marble Giotto, Machiavelli, Dante, Boccaccio, or many another illustrious Italian.

Beyond the comparative dimness of this lofty aisle-like place gleamed the Piazza della Signoria, bathed in sunshine, with that most faultless of all towers darting up, sturdy yet aerial, complex yet simple, from the gray crenellations of the Palazzo Vecchio.

Roland stopped at a little stall in the middle of the *loggiato* and bought a package of corn for one or two soldi. Immediately his outstretched hand, filled with the corn, was besieged by a bevy of charming pigeons, with every imaginable tint of neck and wing, some perching on his arm, some on his shoulders, others hovering above his head, and all making with their wings a sound like the flapping of sails that tack in a sharp wind. As she watched her son thus plumed and epauletted by the tumultuous, greedy birds, Mrs. Garretson thought how brightly and firmly his face shone out from its fantastic environment of feathers,—a face with long, dark moustache, and of chiselled contour, filled with intellect and character.

“Let us take a long drive in the Cascine gardens,” he soon proposed, moving away from his pink-footed pensioners, friends of a few foraging minutes. “And then let us desert our apartments and dine at Doney’s in the Via Tornabuoni.”

His mother readily consented; he was her son, lover, husband, all in one; she could never resist a flattered feeling when he showed palpably that he cared, like this, for hours of her unshared company. And yet, for his own sake, she illogically wanted him to be less indifferent in the line of other feminine lures. She felt that it was time he thought of marrying, even if he did not regard the step as an immediate one. She was prepared to become the least aggressive of mothers-in-law, whatever primary pangs such a *rôle* might cost her. It was very clear to her that her idolatry, unlike so many others, was not fanatical.

She had seen, moreover, that he easily took a secure place in the liking of most young women whom he met. Of course his position and wealth had much to do with this, but by no means all. Yet why was it that no girl among the many fair and engaging ones with whom he was thrown had yet succeeded in lastingly en chaining him?

As they drove among the clipped ilexes and shapely pines of the Cascine gardens, looking up at the terraces of Bellosuardo across the river, whose brassy saffron tints were now shot with specks of sunset rose, Mrs. Garretson said, between playfulness and gravity,—

“You sometimes speak of your art, Roland, as though it were actually your life.”

“It ought to be.”

“Pleasant tidings for myself!”

He caught one of her gloved hands and pressed it. “Jealous already! And yet how often you’ve hinted—more than hinted—” Here he stopped short, and fingered some tiny-petaled myosotis in his coat.

“Oh, yes,” she exclaimed, “and because it seems so much more right and natural. Jealous? Of course, in a way, I should be. But I should have my consolations.”

“In grandchildren?”

"Yes, if you please," she laughed. "I can't think how it was you came out heart-whole from that January and February we've been spending in Rome. There were three or four sweet American girls who liked you enormously."

"Were there?"

"Of course I didn't see much of you at the parties and dinners. But our cousin Caroline assured me—"

"Dear mammy, I'd rather have proposed to a travelling street-singer than have permitted Caroline to arrange for me any matrimonial affair. She was always wanting to play some such part. She married, herself, in the most cold-blooded fashion. I've never told you this before, but I feel sure she had conceived the idea of wedding me to one of her husband's nieces, a thin, dusky girl, with small sharp eyes and a large sharp nose. She used to poke her at me till I became confident the Queen noticed it. But Margherita is so exquisitely high-bred that she would never breathe a word of ridicule about any of her *dames d'honneur*."

"Naturally. And then our Caroline, you know, married so close to Italian royalty itself."

"H'm—yes. That is why she did marry the unprincely Prince Rosticcuoli. It ought to have made the bones of her Knickerbocker grandfather rattle—honest old Myndert Van Corlear, asleep in his vault at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery—when last year, for the fourth time, she paid Rosticcuoli's heavy gambling debts out of the very money for which he sold her his name."

"Don't be bitter, Roland," said his mother, smelling her nosegay. "It's unlike you. Caroline, after all, is herself every inch a princess. And she was very kind to us both. If she has taken a little to match-making, that is better than other pursuits to which a neglected and insulted wife often resorts. Don't profess not to care for the innermost court circles into which she brought you and invited me. Through her you got to know well the lovely and beautiful Queen, over whom only yesterday you were raving, and the gallant, impetuous, half-boyish King, whose democracy, humanity, and sincerity you cannot praise enough. . . Still," she broke off, "I'm wandering far away from my original theme. Don't make a wry face, Roland. You know I never—what's the vernacular?—I never nagged you about it all. But then, dear boy, doesn't it seem odd to yourself that you shouldn't yet care for any girl in the practical manner, extraordinary and still so humanly ordinary? . . Well, well, perhaps I must be maternally responsible for a bachelor. If so, I shan't lament too vehemently. And I'll never say another word on the subject if it pains you to listen."

"Nothing you could say to me would ever pain me," replied Roland, with his usual spontaneous courtesy and devotion.

"But you looked, dear boy—"

"You mean, mother, that I'm squinting? It's the sun on Giotto's campanile, now we're driving north again. Whenever I see that adored miracle of mosaics glisten beside its equally adored Duomo, I'm afraid that enthusiasm blights my facial charms. Poetry may be overbrimming your son's soul, but hard prose inscribes itself on his features."

Mrs. Garretson leaned back in the carriage with a stifled sigh. This was one of Roland's parrying attitudes. Well, if he never did fall genuinely in love, what mattered it? She would go on having him all to herself,—a prospect certainly by no means horrifying. And if he did fall genuinely in love, could she doubt the swift spontaneity of his confession?

Later, as they were seated at Doney's with accompaniments of deft cooking, quiet elegance, and perfect service that might have made them fancy themselves at the *Café Voisin* in Paris, if it had not been for a *fiasco* of excellent Chianti to replace the Gallic bottle of Pontet-Canet or Château-Lafitte, Roland said remindingly,—

“ Didn't the *portière* give you two or three letters just as we left our lodgings? ”

“ Yes,—true. And I've never thought of them since. Here is one for you. The other two are mine.”

“ From dear old Graham Heath in Berlin,” said Roland, after several minutes of reading. “ He's full of his profession, and doing famously. He has just effected a remarkable cure that has boomed him no end as an oculist. A young girl whose eye was almost torn from its socket by an exploding factory-boiler received his surgical treatment and has now regained complete vision.”

“ Dear Graham! . . . how nice! ” said Mrs. Garretson. She was scanning a close-written page of one of her own letters, and spoke somewhat absently. “ Well,” she at length murmured, “ upon my word! ”

Roland had finished his letter. “ Upon your word—what, mother? ”

“ So utterly unexpected! ” said Mrs. Garretson, as if aghast, with eyes still riveted on the page.

“ The unexpected usually happens, doesn't it? ”

“ Two of them! ”

Roland munched an olive in grim amusement. “ How much longer are these mystifying gutturals to continue? ”

“ I could never undertake it,—never! ”

“ Oh, you couldn't? Well, on general principles, knowing you to be a woman of your word, I'll venture to agree with you.”

“ Isabella always did shirk every responsibility. She's their own aunt, while I . . . I'm only connected with them because she's my cousin, and they're the nieces of her dead husband.”

“ A light breaks in upon me at last! ” cried Roland. “ Cousin Isabella Kirkland wants you to bring out those twins. I always knew she would. They're orphans, and her nieces, and she's a nervous, selfish recluse. Poor little things! I remember them as two lank, scraggy girls of ten. I never could tell them apart, they were both so interchangeably and inseparably ugly. And then I recall how queerly they were named; it used to amuse me so much. Let me think, ” and Roland smilingly tapped his forehead. “ Oh, I have it! It was this way: Their mother named them each after two dear female friends of hers. One friend was Flora Meserole and the other was Marion Bramleigh.”

“ True, ”

"And she called one twin 'Marion,' though her full name was Flora Marion Meserole Kirkland, and she called the other twin 'Flora,' though *her* full name was Flora Marion Bramleigh Kirkland. I used to think all that business so droll, and split my boyish sides over it as the rarest of jokes."

With an exasperated tightening of the lips, Mrs. Garretson handed Roland her letter.

"Only read," she said. "I'm so sorry I told Isabella we thought of going back to America this spring and taking a Newport cottage for August and September. As if she didn't know that I've never really gone into society for years! And to chaperon those two girls at Newport! To have them come and live with us until she has returned from her intended trip to Aix-les-Bains and half a dozen other places where her imaginary gout can be coddled and petted! Oh, it is so like Isabella Kirkland! She means in the end to saddle me with the girls forever—or until they marry. Of course I shall write her at once that the plan is impossible. She can take them with her to Europe, or she can use a slice of their own very respectable incomes in hiring one of their boarding-school teachers to pass the summer with them at her own country-place in Peekskill. . . Come, now, Roland, do you not think this 'request' a piece of the most shocking impudence?"

Roland had laid down the letter, and was playing with his fork. "Oh," he said, musingly and slowly, "it seems rather hard on Isabella to believe she meant it so."

"Hard on her! Good heavens! are you taking her part?"

"Not at all. If I took anybody's part it would be that of these two poor orphaned twins."

"They're not so 'poor,' if you please."

"Oh, I didn't mean in a mercenary sense. Nobody to bring them out in society, though. Tossed from Isabella to you, and from you to somebody else. It certainly is pathetic. Let's have a *fiaschetto* more of this nice wine and discuss their woful fate."

"Not a drop more for me," said Mrs. Garretson, putting a hand over her glass, as women sometimes will. "And I shan't toss them to 'somebody else.' I shall toss them back to Isabella."

"Poor waifs!" Roland said.

His mother bit one corner of her lip as she looked across the table and saw certain flickerings of fun in either corner of her son's.

"You're not taking this letter at all as I expected, Roland. It seems to have plunged you into some curious revery. How? Why? What is the mystery?"

She soon learned. Roland had for some time past more strongly wished that his mother should cease to cloak her life with retirement than she, on her own side, had wished him to marry. Mrs. Kirkland had been audacious; why should not he become the same? It thrilled him most agreeably to think of his mother's delicate, patrician neck blazing at a Newport ball with some of those old family jewels which had lain in darkness for so many years. And then the twins might not be quite so hideous, after all. Girls had a way of shedding their

ugliness as they grew older. Perhaps, anyway, they were sweet and clever; not a few unbeautiful maidens were interesting, he had found. And if they served as a means of gently pushing his mother across the dim thresholds of certain solitudes and monotonies for which she had long shown far too monastic a preference, what a gracious pair of godsends might they not prove!

III.

"How much life can be crowded into a few short weeks!"

Eleanor Garretson spoke thus to her own thoughts. She was seated, one delightful afternoon in early June, at a window of Widewood. Below her, dashed and spangled with sunshine, or bathed and tranquillized with shade, spread the big green tennis-ground. Four young figures were moving here and there about it, with springy steps and vigilant bats, two on either side the stretched net. Sex in this alert quartette was equally divided. Roland and a certain young neighbor, a Mr. Lydig Pearsall, had each taken for his partner one of the Kirkland twins.

"And to think that I consented!" Mrs. Garretson's ruminations went on. "Here are those girls, living with us at Widewood, and they have been here since the beginning of May. So charmed was the triumphant Isabella at my consent that she wouldn't even permit them to stay at the boarding-school for their formal graduation in June. Oh, no; it was far more important that they should learn to know me well (and love me, as they were sure to do,—unctuous Isabella!) before the giddiness and preoccupation of Newport began. Well, they are pleasant disappointments, when all is said. The beautiful Flora is far less so than the plain Marion. And with the beautiful Flora my experienced and unsusceptible Roland has tumbled—no, not tumbled, but glided—irretrievably in love!"

Luncheon was served a little later, and the four young people, all looking quite unjaded, came in-doors to partake of it with a promptness explainable by sharpened appetite. The conversation was careless and rather merry.

"You are to be at Newport later on, Lydig?" Mrs. Garretson asked. "You are to see me re-emerge among the vanities?" She had known all Lydig Pearsall's people for years, and though she did not like this young man, with his hard blond face, his lank figure dressed to an intensity of fashion, and his native bluntness and hauteur enamelled with a factitious courtesy and breeding, she nevertheless always treated him as though his defects had wholly escaped her.

"I shall be there, of course," Pearsall answered. He looked admiringly at the speaker, liking her chiefly because she was popular, despite her long seclusion. He always liked popular people, and, notwithstanding a great deal of what is called "position," both in the way of wealth and caste, there was hardly anything he detested more than being seen with a man or woman who had not many valuing and endorsing friends.

"I supposed your parents would go to Steepcliff as usual. You must promise to be nice if you see me standing or sitting all alone on the *estrade* of the dowagers."

"No such danger, Mrs. Garretson, I'm confident. My great trouble will be getting near you at all."

"How lazily he says that!" exclaimed Flora Kirkland, with her dimpled chin at a saucy upward angle. "In boarding-school we were taught always to deliver compliments as though we meant them."

"Indeed?" said Pearsall, beginning with a hardness which the blue laughter of Flora's eyes may have softened. "Was there an extra charge exacted for that line of instruction, as among the more difficult accomplishments?"

"Oh, no," said Flora, straightening her lithe young body with virginal hauteur. "We had no chair of Hypocrisy among our feminine professorships. It continued empty for want of a male occupant."

"What man of common sense would have dared to assume it?" replied Pearsall, with a twinkling glance at Roland, which his friend did not very briskly return.

"Tell me, Cousin Eleanor," cried Flora, "are all the gentlemen whom Marion and I shall meet at Newport going to try and tease us, like this, with rude remarks?"

"No," said Roland, gayly: "they'll be more like me."

"You, too, have your moods," pouted Flora. "Yesterday I begged you to read me the chapter of your new novel which you'd finished the day before, and you refused point-blank."

"Oh, he's often behaved in the same way with me," said Mrs. Garretson, "and I've taken it quite meekly."

"There, Flora," said her sister Marion, "see how you stand rebuked."

"No, no, my children!" cried Mrs. Garretson, holding up both her hands in depreciation. "I'm not going to begin thus early in the day to scold either of you."

"Mother knows she'll have enough to do when she gets you to Newport, and when flirtations, not to say imprudences, load the atmosphere," austere stated Roland.

Flora looked at her sister with a droll *moue*. "Pshaw! Marion couldn't flirt if she tried. Could you, dear?"

Marion colored, and Mrs. Garretson flew to her rescue. "She's going to be sensible, and not waste her sweetness. I shall bring her back brilliantly engaged, Flora, and you will have to be her bridesmaid in the autumn."

"Oh, I can wait," said Flora, plunging her white teeth into the lifted segment of an orange. "I shan't be contented with anything but an English duke. Mr. Pearsall knows one whom he has promised to introduce."

"I made a mistake about him," said Pearsall: "he's only an Italian duke."

"What treachery!" frowned Flora. "I'd rather marry an out-and-out American."

"Delightful sentiments," remarked Roland, helping himself to wine, "from a girl who hasn't yet worn her first smart frock at even an afternoon tea."

"Pah!" shot Flora, her face all pearly and rose-leaf beauty below its billows of ruddy chestnut hair, "I intend leaving demureness and sedateness to Marion there. When I appear in society I shall have no bread-and-butter prettinesses, be sure of that! I mean to become a belle—a reigning belle—or nothing. If I am not immensely admired as soon as I come out, I shall retire promptly. No half-way successes for *me*, if you please. It must be *veni, vidi, vici*, or else a dignified and scornful retreat."

Of course the words were flung out as mere levity and banter, and the bloomy and flexile lips that spoke them, and the radiant, *riant* face in which those lips were luringly centred, made their daring to be at once condoned and credited. Under his brows Pearsall sent a look at Flora which Mrs. Garretson secretly noted. It was a little grim, though in the main humorous, and it seemed to wear hidden meanings of unrest and discontent. . . .

Three good hours later, when Pearsall had long ago taken his leave, Roland's mother sat in a shaded part of the great Widewood piazza, busied with the last pages of a book whose texture was coarse enough to let in outward impressions, like glimpses we catch through the interstices of cheap wicker-work.

She was thinking of her new charges while she read, and could see them, too, in much the same way that she thought of them; for yonder, just across the carriage-drive, and viewed by permission, as it were, of the green zigzags a copious Virginia creeper wrought in the opposite trellis, these two girls were seated on the same rustic bench of a large open summer-house, each with a piece of fancy-work, their voices floating out intermittently on the calm country air.

A step sounded behind Mrs. Garretson's chair just as the last word of her book was reached. While Roland was dropping into a seat at her side, she said, with voice that for her sounded pettish,—

"I'm glad you don't write such trying books as Brixton's."

"They sell by the tons."

"No doubt; they're heavy enough. Have you been writing for the last hour?"

"I've—" He hesitated, flushing a little. "Oh, I've been putting into something like proper shape that chapter Flora wanted to hear. She was really so . . . so tyrannical about it, you know."

"She wishes her own way, certainly. Look yonder; how she seems to be laying down the law to Marion!"

"Right," said Roland, throwing back his head in deep if silent mirth. "And what a pretty picture they make there together! do they not?"

"I'm afraid the prettiness for you is all diffused from a single point, my son."

"By no means," Roland said, with some positiveness, after a slight pause. "By no means," he repeated; "for though Flora is beautiful and Marion is plain—"

"I think her face charming," struck in Mrs. Garretson.

"Certain plain faces are. But in this group of two it is wholly a question of lines, curves, symmetries. And here the girls are identical. Never were twins more precisely alike in stature, modelling, movement, all but face. I am certain one couldn't tell Marion's arm from Flora's, or Flora's foot from Marion's. Even the size and shape of their heads are similar, as are the width and length of their throats. But more than this, and still stranger, their features are exactly alike. Notice either's pair of ears—interchangeable! See either's mouth—duplicates! But when it comes to expression (and I suppose the hues of eyes and hair are to be rated as expression), how all resemblance vanishes! Flora has a real Greuze face, full of witcheries indeterminate, and Marion might appeal to one as virtuous, intelligent, and companionable, but surely little more. Flora's eyes are blue and sparkling as the June Mediterranean, and Marion's are of some darkish, rather rayless tint that I fail to recall. Flora's hair is chestnut powdered with a subtle gold-dust not purchasable of any chemist on this particular planet, and Marion's, if I mistake not, is a modest flaxen. Yet the locks of both have a ripple in them,—curious coincidence. All in all, it is marvellous how nature has made these two girls so differing yet so alike."

Mrs. Garretson bowed assent. She had drooped her gaze, and now, with a quick uplifting of it, she asked,—

"But their characters, dispositions, souls, spirits,—whatever you choose to name them? For my part, Roland, I tell you frankly,—and it's my first reference to the subject, as I'm sure you will agree,—Marion is thrice the woman her sister is, in every quality of mental and moral worth."

"Ah, that's quite another affair," said Roland, dryly. "Listen to their voices," he went on, raising one hand. "It's some argument, discussion, I suppose, and we catch fragmentary waftures of it. Were ever two voices such echoes of one another? It almost passes credence."

"Flora's voice is sprightlier, more staccato, more—"

"I know, I know. In method it conforms with her vivacious temperament. But in tone it is Marion's, or Marion's is hers. If either of them said some ordinary thing, such as 'Good-morning,' or 'I'm going for a walk,' you could not find a shade of dissimilarity. Gayety, impetuosity, emotion,—these belong to one and not the other."

"Perhaps you are better acquainted than I am with Flora's emotional inflections," Mrs. Garretson answered. Her words were veiled in a sort of playful slyness, and her son quickly responded by a keen, uneasy look.

"I'm afraid," he said, with a sudden gloomy doggedness, "that she's considerably better acquainted with mine."

"Roland!" broke from his mother. "Has it really come to this?"

"Oh, you must have seen," he said, with a defiant and yet confessional air.

"You've told her—"

"That I'm in love with her? Yes. Several times."

Mrs. Garretson rose and went toward a big drooping spray of vine, curling stem and tendrils round a neighbor wire. While thus engaged, she said, placidly,—

"Might you not have waited?"

"I might, yes. But I somehow couldn't." Then he also rose and joined his mother. His arm stole about her waist as he murmured,—

"Didn't you think it had gone so far, mammy dear?"

"I—I thought something had happened," she faltered. "Roland, do you mean that you are engaged to the girl?"

"Engaged? If it had really come to that I'd have told you at once."

"Well, well, my boy," said Mrs. Garretson, turning and facing him, "do you mean it *is* coming to that?"

"Inevitably,—if she will consent."

"Consent! As if she'd refuse you! She's immensely ambitious, as we both know."

"She's immensely elusive."

Mrs. Garretson stifled a sigh. "She hasn't yet seen anything, been anywhere."

"Of course she hasn't. Still, she has the air, sometimes, of having passed her third season. Besides," Roland added, muttering, "she's grown to be excellent friends with Lydig Pearsall. That in itself is a fruitful experience."

"I thought you liked Lydig."

"I don't like her to like him. He's forgotten more worldly badness than that dear, frisking, innocent girl will ever be called upon to learn."

This, as it seemed to poor Mrs. Garretson, was putting jealousy in very lurid colors. Disrelish now actually glared from the idea of bringing out as a Newport *débutante* a girl who was the sweetheart, whether confirmed or probable, of her own son. Even if the matter were kept a sacred secret, it would somehow transpire. Such secrets, even when most guarded, always did somehow transpire. The spice would be eliminated from the whole coming enterprise. It was one from which the lady, as we know, had originally shrunk, yet afterward it had become not only palatable but welcome because of Roland's obvious approval and zest.

"I don't think Lydig a man of the best moral stamp," she said, "and nothing interests him very much except sport. Still, he's one of thousands, and his mother would be amazed if almost any girl refused him. She wouldn't be amazed, however, Roland, if the girl refused him on *your* account, and you know it very well indeed."

"With what a fine imperial air you say that!" smiled Roland, kissing her on the forehead. "You must practise the attitude; it will be so becoming when you wear your tiara, a few weeks hence."

Just then Mrs. Garretson saw the girls rise, leave the summer-house, and approach the piazza steps. At the same time Roland picked up her fallen novel and opened it.

"You say this is so dull, mother? *I* never could read one of

Brixton's things without yawning so that I nearly swallowed the book. I——”

“ Roland !”

She sprang toward him. He looked down at her in a dazed and strained way, one hand slipping round her neck while the other, still holding the book, flutteredly shaded his eyes. Time was reversing its course with Mrs. Garretson. She saw a little boy in a blouse-like dress, peering at a picture-book and swinging his head curiously back and forward.

“ What was it, Roland ?” she demanded, excitedly. “ Tell me. Did your sight fail you ?”

“ Yes,—for a minute,—a few seconds.” He stared at the book again. “ It's all right now. The same thing happened yesterday, and once last week ; but it passed away instantly. Now, dear mammy, why do you look so worried ? It's nothing of the faintest importance. . . . Here are the girls.”

Flora was the first to reveal herself, coming up between bunchy masses of vine that made a verdant framework for her beauteous presence, fitting it like some sort of wondrous malachite sculpture. “ Delightful !” she cried, in a voice of arch mockery, as Roland withdrew his arm from his mother's neck. “ Alida Pearsall was right, I think, when she told me, the other day, that Roland would never marry, Cousin Eleanor, while you stood for him in the place of all conceivable family affection.”

“ Flora !” came the soft remonstrating voice of her sister, who had now mounted the last step of the piazza, just behind her.

Roland looked full into Flora's eyes for a moment, watching them flash their impertinence. Then, under his breath, he said something about Lydig Pearsall's sister, whom he thought a hoyden and vixen,—something that may have been even as ill-tempered as “ Alida Pearsall to the devil,”—and passed through a big, low window, completely out of sight.

IV.

His own study, where he wrote and thought, and where (perhaps in artistic moods too whimsically dainty and dilettante) he sometimes told himself that he could neither think nor write with respectable potency, lay but a short distance from the large door-like window which he had quitted. He sought this room, and threw himself into a great leathern chair, close to the writing-table, on which were some scattered sheets of manuscript. These were the last completed chapter of his novel, and for more than an hour he had been putting its text into a shape that might do for the promised reading to Flora, though it would never suit him for publication till many future revisions were made in it.

“ What a fool I am !” he thought. “ She is clever enough, in certain ways, but the subtleties, the fine lights and shades I've tried for in those scribblings would never really appeal to her. She hasn't a

literary hair in all those numberless gold-brown ones of her enchanting head. And yet, at her impudent nod, I'll read her sentences that I've spent hours over, trying to carve as if they were marble or color as if they were canvas. It's too sadly absurd!"

Soon there came a soft knock at the door, and Flora presented herself. She went straight up to Roland with a sort of demure boldness, and sat down directly in front of him. Then she began to smooth out, with much care, the front folds of her frock. A slanted bar of sunshine from a near window smote her exquisite bowed head, making the sweet cloud of her hair glisten as though with some delicate inner light.

"I'm so sorry if I offended you. They seemed to think I had. So I came right in to make my peace with you. I—I should have remembered, no doubt, that you are not particularly fond of Alida Pearsall."

Roland gave a quick, thin laugh. "I've not the least objection to her,—not the least. But she knows as much whether I intend to marry or not, as—" he paused—"as you do."

At this Flora raised her captivating blue eyes and gave her companion the full benefit of their pellucid splendors. "Why, Roland! what on earth do *I* know about your marrying?"

"Nothing, of course. And you probably care the same." In a trice he had wheeled his chair close to hers. "You ought to care, however. Do you know why?"

"Ought to care?"

"Yes. Because if I ever marry I shall marry—*you*."

Her face, as she turned it swiftly toward him and then averted it, made him think of fleet boreal lights rosily chasing one another across tracks of pearl-pale sky.

"Oh, you *shall* marry me, shall you?" she murmured, wilfully.

"How could I, Flo, unless you would let me?"

His hand caught hers. It fluttered in his grasp, then stayed quiet there. "I hate to be called Flo," she announced, with a queer, dreamy petulance,—the intuitive instinctive tactics of the born coquette. "Marion sometimes does it. I've told her I don't like it."

"Then I'll never call you so again. You shall be Flora always. Will you be Flora Garretson some day? Do you love me enough to be that?"

She made no reply, and he lifted her hand and held it against his lips.

"My dear girl," he presently said, breaking the silence, "I love you very much. But I don't want you to say 'yes' except you can say so quite out of your heart. Perhaps your heart gives you no certain answer. Or perhaps it tells you that you do not love me at all. Or perhaps it tells you that you do not love me—enough."

With a charming movement—a kind of ferociously graceful one—she snatched her hand from his. Then she folded her arms and leaned back in her chair, with a look tender yet mutinous.

"I know what my heart tells me. You are cruel. For one thing, it tells me that."

"Flora," he said, leaning closer to her, "as if I could be cruel!"

"But you are."

"No, no. I am cautious."

"Cautious! What a word!"

"Considerate, then."

"For yourself—yes."

"No, no. For you. I want you to be sure,—quite sure. Are you?"

"Of what?" she flung at him.

"Ah, you're incorrigible," he sighed.

"And you are cold-blooded."

"I? Flora! Haven't I told you that I love you? Haven't I asked you to be my wife?"

"H'm—yes; yet as if you doubted the sincerity of my answer."

"But you've given me no answer."

"How can I?" she quavered, beginning to weep,—or to seem as if she wept.

He caught her in his arms and held her firmly so, while she struggled a little, though not with any marked vehemence. "There, now," he said, "forgive me, and tell me if you really love me with all your heart,—yes or no."

He heard her faltered "yes," and crushed it on her lips with a betrothal kiss, long and passionate. Then followed for him a dizzying half-hour, which seemed briefer than five minutes.

"I suppose your mother must be told," at length said Flora, prosaically.

"Oh, yes."

"And . . . everybody else, Roland?"

"Shall you not tell your sister?"

"Marion? Why, of course. And—and I'd like to write Rachel Rockford about it, if you don't object."

"Rachel Rockford? Who on earth is she?"

"Why, don't you remember? I've so often mentioned Rachel. She's my bosom-friend—after Marion, of course."

"Oh, your fellow-graduate. She wanted you to come on and stay with her people in Philadelphia this spring."

"Her people in Philadelphia," said Flora, pertly and primly, "are very important people indeed, you'll be good enough to recollect. Everybody knows the Rockfords of Philadelphia. Her mother used to come on and see Rachel at Madame Delacour's. Such a sweet woman! A little younger than your mother, and . . . well, almost as charming. She took a great fancy to me."

"By no means remarkable."

"And I'd like both her and Rachel to know." Here Flora looked meditative, slowly shaking her head. "That would be all. No one else need be told. That is, not until next winter. Don't you think it best to arrange that way?"

Roland gave a hearty laugh. In his happiness he could only enjoy the evident cool-headed circumspection of his new sweetheart.

"Just as you please, Flora. I think 'best' whatever you prefer.

If you wanted the grass to be blue and the sky green, I should suffer pangs of regret that I couldn't effect such alteration."

She rose, at this, glancing toward a big Colonial clock that ticked in one of the corners. "You delightful Roland! Don't tempt me to be a tyrant. . . There; it's time I was dressed for my horseback-ride."

"Your horseback-ride?"

"Why, yes. Mr. Pearsall, you know, is to bring over his mare, Fantine, and I'm going on her with him for a few miles."

"This is news to me," Roland said.

"Really? I thought you——" She stopped, as if the little falsehood refused to let her speak it.

"This Fantine, Flora, is not a safe animal. She's very handsome, a thoroughbred, and all that; but she has twice come very near throwing Alida Pearsall, of late, and the girl is now mortally afraid to ride her."

"Oh, but then her own brother says that she rides very badly."

"That is a mistake, for I've watched her several times in the saddle, and she is really an excellent horsewoman."

"I," said Flora, with her head a little in the air, "was Madame Delacour's very most proficient pupil,—or, I should say, Monsieur Bougarnier's, for he was our riding-master, and again and again he has told me that I could ride to the hounds with perfect ease."

"You might find some difference between Central Park and the open country," said Roland. "However, Flora, whether you ride well or ill, I must ask you not to mount Fantine."

"Oh, now, come, . . I can't—I truly can't oblige you." She looked ravishingly pretty as she thus replied. She had receded several steps, and was slowly tearing into pink slivers the big petal drawn from a rose at her bosom. "I've promised Lydig,—Mr. Pearsall,—and I'm not at all afraid of the mare; and . . and . . ." She suddenly broke into a melodious little tempest of laughter, dropped Roland a hasty yet elaborate courtesy, and darted out of the room.

He felt fiercely jealous, for a while. Then the protective impulse conquered all others. He quitted the library and went to the stables, leaving there a certain order.

Possibly suspicious of hostile agencies, Lydig Pearsall sent over Fantine by one of his grooms, and joined Flora just as she was quitting the grounds of Widewood, himself mounted on a horse of striking build and grace. But nothing could quite equal Fantine in Flora's eyes; she had fallen in love with the beautiful, supple, symmetric mare, and at once, on meeting Pearsall, expressed her rapturous approbation. Meanwhile Roland had seen her depart with the groom, and had observed Pearsall join her a little later. He was ensconced at an upper window, and his frame of mind was extremely perturbed. Mrs. Garretson and Marion stood on the piazza, watching her departure, both of them distressed by her wilfulness. Not that either knew of Roland's opposition, but each had her doubts of the girl's prudence in thus riding an animal with which she was wholly unfamiliar and one whose repute for tractability verged on the shabbiest.

To their surprise, just as Mrs. Garretson was passing in-doors she

observed her son riding a favorite horse of his own, and taking a road which led past the house from the stables to the main gate.

"Roland," she cried to him.

He halted. "Well, mother?"

"You're going to join Flora?"

"I'm going to keep her in sight." And he trotted on, looking gallant and handsome, sitting his horse with fine unconscious ease.

He overtook Flora and her escort, and for a long time kept them in sight through modes of mingled vigilance and adroitness that they were far from suspecting. Fantine behaved admirably for several miles. Her pace was very often slackened, for Pearsall preferred that kind of going, with a lot of pretty and impudent and provocative things to say to the damsel on her back. He was always fond of teasing the other sex, but to tease Flora was just now his special joy, perhaps because the measure of her attraction eclipsed that of any other girl he had ever met.

But it did not suit Flora to continue a lagging gait forever. She whipped up her mare twice, and went each time for a good long distance at a fleet gallop. The third time she did this they were returning home, after having narrowly missed coming full upon Roland, who saved himself by a side lane just at the right minute. And this third time Fantine shied a little at some object as slight as a falling leaf, and then suddenly bolted.

For three good minutes Lydig Pearsall urged his horse to stout effort, and at last so gained upon the wild leaps of the mare that his outstretched hand nearly caught her bridle. But just then a calamitous thing occurred; his horse violently stumbled, came within an ace of unseating its skilled rider, and afterward nearly fell on the roadside, shuddering with the agony of a sprained tendon.

On swept Fantine. With despair Pearsall saw her turn a bend in the road, where a colossal cluster of wreath-elms, twinkling in the late sunlight, quickly swallowed her. With impetuosity—cruelty, if you will—he dug his spurs into his horse's sides. The poor brute rushed forward, and then stopped staggeringly, with a whinny of pain.

In a minute more Roland shot past Pearsall, and disappeared beyond the elms precisely as Fantine and her burden had done so brief a while since. When Roland got sight of the mare she was plunging straight on, without the least swerve in her breakneck course. It flashed through him that Flora kept her seat admirably. But this kind of security could not last much longer. The mare was a devil, and would soon show her cloven hoof in all its deadly entirety.

Roland's horse was of good speed, he well knew, and latterly he had suspected him of reserve powers which might have made him a gem of price for the steeple-chasers. He drew promptly on this accredited force, and at once it responded with surprising and heartening results. A few more seconds, and eight hoofs were thundering along almost in concert. Roland's great fear now was that Fantine might try to dash away sideways from her pursuer.

"Keep your seat firmly, whatever you do," he shouted. "I'm gaining on you every instant."

It was true. Fantine turned once or twice, with her lustrous auburn ears the incarnation of quick hearing, eager hearkening. Her lissome body would then dart on with a freshened wildness, as though she had said aloud, "You think this a runaway; I will show you what a real runaway means." But with every such spurt the delicate, elastic creature failed, visibly losing speed.

"Flora, Flora," came Roland's voice, growing closer and closer, "in a few seconds more I'll be near enough. Keep up your courage, my darling, darling girl! *Brava*, dearest! how splendidly you ride! . . . I'll have that devil of a mare straight off. . . . I've almost got her now. . . . There!"

In a clutch tense and sure he caught Fantine's bridle. She reared, but not dangerously, though the sudden stoppage almost unseated Flora, who instantly sprang from her back, safe on the roadside. Roland saw that she was safe, and gave a glad cry; but as this left his lips a horrible disaster befell him. That part of the road on which his horse's hind legs were planted at the moment of Flora's rescue chanced to be all one ragged earthy rim, with a rain-broken embankment dipping in gashes and gullies ten feet below. As Destiny, in one of her darker moods, ordained, a hind-foot of Roland's admirable steed, pushed obliquely toward this insecure edge, broke off nearly a yard of soil by its vigorous backward pressure. To Roland, just as he was joyfully leaping to the ground and joining Flora, came a dreadful sense of rearward collapse. His horse, struggling like a man in danger of drowning, made frantic scrambles, only to fall sideways across the traitorous parapet. And Roland fell with him, pitched out of his saddle and vanishing from Flora's sight, while the girl gave a shriek of that keenly human and feminine sort which no dash-away pranks of the maddened mare had been able to wring from her.

V.

After watching Roland ride out from the lawns of Widewood, Mrs. Garretson went up-stairs and remained for a good while in her own apartments, musing on the annoyance and regret she had undergone.

Why had not Marion Kirkland the beauty and enticement of her sister? She had for women a great deal of rare companionability; on that point there could not be a doubt. But for men—oh, Roland was like all the others; mere skin-deep beauty had conquered him at last. Flora's character was no more profound than the infantile azure of her eyes. Already she had revealed herself as trivial and capricious. Her accomplishments were all superficial; she did nothing well—except, possibly, ride on horseback. Marion had been forced to admit more than her sisterly loyalty dreamed of on these points, now so vital because of Roland's preference. Mrs. Garretson had subtly cross-examined her unawares, and had learned of Flora the most disheartening things, correspondent with her own portentous impressions.

"And Marion herself cares for Roland!" Mrs. Garretson's reflections went on. "Oh, I have watched and seen. What a perfect

daughter-in-law that dear girl would make me! I would trust her with my boy's future to-morrow. Lydig Pearsall is welcome to Flora, if he wants her. I wish they would ride together to some sort of Gretna Green and be married there." Then came a sudden revulsion of motherly feeling. "No," she pursued; "I can't wish anything that would deal him sorrow. And if he has really made up his mind about Flora, I in turn must make duty smother discontent. After all, his choice should be my choice. The moment he came to me and told me that he and Flora were really engaged, I ought to see my path quite clearly and walk it with no affected resignation, but with the heartiest gratulation and good cheer."

Later, having dressed for dinner, Mrs. Garretson went down-stairs, and came face to face with Marion in the large lower hall.

"My dear," she said, "let us take a walk out on the road this lovely afternoon, and try to meet the returning equestrians there."

Marion smiled and nodded her answer. They had got well out among the fresh, rich trees and rolling grasses of the lawns, before she said,—

"I do so fear that Flora has vexed you."

"It *was* a rather headstrong thing," replied Mrs. Garretson. "And I told her very clearly that I thought she owed me the courtesy of acquainting me with her intent."

"She feared your refusal."

"Do you really think that?" laughed the elder lady, with irony. "I'm afraid any veto of mine would strike her as made of very brittle material."

"No; you wrong her," said Marion, with prompt earnestness. "She would not dare to disobey any actual command of yours."

"Not dare? Flora!"

"It's true," protested Marion. "Oh, I assure you it's true. She has the deepest respect for your authority. She realizes most keenly all you have volunteered to do for us, and the complete absence of claim on our part to your protection and kindness."

"And yet," said Mrs. Garretson, with a smile whose scepticism she could not restrain, "her respect for my authority takes the odd shape of evading its exercise when she believes that this will prove adverse to her own tastes and plans. I had already told Lydig in her hearing that I thought Alida Pearsall most foolish if she ever again rode that risky mare. But, apart from this, I feel certain that Roland has very recently given your sister his views on the question of her going, and that she has opposed them. For I know that she went to him in the library and stayed there quite a little time before passing up-stairs to put on her riding-habit."

And then Mrs. Garretson told of how she had seen her son leaving the grounds of Widewood on horseback, and how she had called to him, and what answer she had received.

"Did he say that? Did he really say that?" replied Marion, with an excited dance of tones and look. Then, more soberly, as her companion turned and regarded her, "I'm so glad, for Flora's sake! Now she will have two guardians if the mare should misbehave."

They walked on, through a part of the lawn road darkened by immense firs, and soon emerged from the sweet-smelling dusk of these upon the high, plain, drab-painted gateway of wood, wholly un-armorial and American. A flat sweep of country met them on every side. There were no hills in the distance worth the name. In a certain sense it was the most typical of our national landscapes. Nature was unassuming, simple, pastoral, and what might easily be called commonplace. And yet to Mrs. Garretson, who had seen her in hundreds of ravishing and sublime moods, this humility, withal so verdurous and fertile, brought thrills of peaceful relief. Travel as one might among the glories and celebrities of foreign mountains, vales, and coasts, this quiet home-coming into modest encompassments of full-foliaged trees and daisied meadows, overarched by a sky which Italy herself could not now excel for depth and color, was fraught for her with exquisite refreshment. Here was nothing to be "visited" and "recollected." It was all a meek and delicious defiance of the guide-book. One wanted no Baedeker below yonder tangle of wild-cherry boughs that shaded the deep-rutted lane lined with blackberry and eglantine. It led to no ruined castle, no famed monastery, no crumbling temple. The musical afternoon breeze sighed through big densities of ragged-leaved chestnuts with quite as opulent melody as though it played among the boughs of the Doria Pamfili or fluttered over the sculpture-thronged slopes of the Boboli gardens.

"Yes, Marion, you are right, my dear. She will have two attendant cavaliers, and doubtless be all the more amused and diverted on this account."

"She has convinced you, I fear, that she is very flippant."

"Just as you have convinced me to the contrary."

"But surely there are worse faults than flippancy."

"Oh, yes. But I should hate to have him marry a flippant woman."

"Him? My dear Mrs. Garretson, of whom are you thinking?"

"Roland, of course," the lady said, with a little start. "You—you—caught me napping—wool-gathering—for a moment, I grant." Here she laid a hand on Marion's wrist. "My dear girl, why should I not say it right out? He's in love with Flora; he wants to marry her; she has entirely captured him."

Was it fancy, or did Mrs. Garretson feel the flesh of Marion's wrist grow chill just as her clasp released it? She dealt in the device of not seeming to see her young companion's face at all, while at the same time commanding of it a fair yet furtive side-view; and she thus perceived that it flurriedly flushed, then as flurriedly paled.

Marion's answer was slow in coming. "You speak as if you were sorry."

"Oh, it's certainly premature, and in a sense most irritating. To bring out at Newport, this summer, an engaged girl! It flavors of farce."

"But . . . she's not yet engaged."

"What may have happened in the library, this afternoon? Apparently only a quarrel; but, if so, to-morrow will see the reconciliation."

tion. Roland is forgiving,—especially where his affections have been implicated. My dear Marion, however well you may know your sister, I know my son equally well. He is determined to make Flora his own ; for the first time in his life he is rootedly in love. I've never seen him like this before, and we've been great chums, as I think I told you not long ago, for a lot of years. We've knocked about Europe together like a phenomenal brother and sister—or, if you please, a phenomenal mother and son, which I suppose we most conspicuously are." The speaker turned, now, and looked full at Marion. They had left the roadside, passed again through the gateway, plunged once more into the aromatic dusk of the giant firs, and nearly reached that same rustic summer-house where the twins had been seated with their fancy-work a few hours ago.

"Yes," Mrs. Garretson continued, "Roland is mastered this time, and freely confesses it." She moved through the opening of the rather ugly and ordinary little cedar structure, and Marion loiteringly joined her as she sank on one of its seats. Loiteringly, because the girl had a sense of something volcanic in Mrs. Garretson beneath a surface of restless and enforced repose.

Having seated herself, Roland's mother let both hands lie limp in the lap of her dark gown, and surveyed them as though (or thus it oddly struck Marion) they were living yet thwarted agencies of some escaped and hopeless accomplishment,—something they would have put forth their best manual power to achieve, if only cruel circumstance had not said them a tyrant nay. Staring downward like that, she again began to speak.

"Going to Newport—raking up my buried past again, with all its hidden ghosts of memories—meant a great effort for me. It will mean a much greater one now, as you can well imagine."

"Then don't make it," suddenly pleaded Marion. "I'm sure I don't care for the vanity and pomp of it. I much prefer Widewood till late in the autumn. And as for Flora, why should she not come out after marriage—since you're so certain of her engagement to Roland?"

Mrs. Garretson sighed heavily ; then she laughed,—a faint laugh, steeped in mockery.

"My dear girl ! As if I haven't read your secret !"

"Cousin Eleanor!" . . . Marion made a movement as if to rise, but the other grasped her arm and thus checked her. "Pardon me, Marion ; but you mustn't fancy I'm trying to make you show me your heart. I've seen it already ; I'm very keen,—perhaps past suffering has rendered me so,—and I've somehow watched that heart bleed. A very womanly and brave and precious little heart it is. Compared with Flora's it's like an agate beside a ruby. And he doesn't dream you've given it to him, that stupid son of mine ! There, Marion,—I couldn't help it,—the truth would push itself out of me ! I've known many a girl whom I'd have been *willing* he should marry, but I've never known one whom I'd *love* to have him marry, my dear, except your own sweet, dignified, duteous, wholesome self. You've no idea what curious thoughts I've had during the past few weeks. I've

imagined myself living in the days of love-philters and such nonsensical mystic potions. What a beverage I'd have brewed for him if those old superstitious times had enveloped our several lives! And then, again and again, I've said to myself, 'Could he only look into each of their natures as I, with my unbiassed feminine eyes, can look, how Flora's outward image, with all its tricksy comeliness, would dwindle beside Marion's?' For you, Marion, could give him real and lasting happiness—she, never!"

"Oh, Cousin Eleanor—" began Marion, choking back the tears.

"It's true. Let me say it out, and get a certain relief I've been aching for. Marion, I'd give half my fortune to turn the tide of his sentiment from her to you. Do you know, I find myself wishing—yes, actually it's true—the most malevolent things."

"Ah, not that anything might happen to her, I hope," cried Marion. "Flora is light, but she's not evil. Even what may sometimes seem her selfishness is born of this very levity."

"That something might physically happen?" Mrs. Garretson replied. "Pah! no, no, my dear; I haven't any such triviality of heartlessness, thank heaven. My depravity took another form."

"Depravity! Cousin Eleanor! As if you could injure a fellow-creature! I've known you long enough to be certain you'd rather die."

"And yet I *have* yielded, Marion, to the grimmest moods. I've longed that she might do something to make him hate her, despise her. I've wanted her to be found out in some horrid falsehood by him,—to be convicted in his eyes of the most shocking treachery and deceit. I believe—yes, I positively believe—that I'd have felt a certain wicked gladness if some worse misdeed had wrenched them apart—shame, dishonor—oh, I realize it's horribly base of me to harbor such thoughts—and yet—"

Marion sprang up and put one hand with tender violence on the fluttering lips at her side.

"Hush! hush! You must not tell me! We all have gruesome ideas like these; I'm not so young that I can't understand them in you, loving him as you do love him. But don't let us exchange another word on this whole wretched subject. What is to be must be. You say that I—I care for him. It was not fair of you to—to assail me with that affirmation; but never mind. She is my sister; he is your son. Let there be peace and silence henceforth between you and me. I give you my warmest sympathy, knowing henceforth how you feel. But it must be a sympathy unspoken, always. I know you only as the best and sweetest of women. This revolt against what you yourself concede to be the inevitable—this revolt, Cousin Eleanor, fraught for me with so surprising a bitterness—I shall struggle to forget,—and I shall succeed in forgetting. Yes, I shall succeed, for all your native loveliness and goodness will sturdily aid me in the effort."

Rising, Mrs. Garretson gathered the girl's hands together, and pressed them, thus joined, against her tremulous mouth.

"You're right, Marion,—so right! It is you who are the woman, not I. Ah, where did a *jeune fille* like yourself learn such wisdom and temperance and self-control?"

"Hark," said Marion, slipping to the door of the summer-house. "Wheels on the drive. There's a carriage coming up to the door. Visitors, I suppose. Shall you be at home?"

Before Mrs. Garretson had framed either a yes or a no, the vehicle came softly rushing to the opposite steps. It paused there: Lydig Pearsall sprang from the driver's box, opened its door, and gave egress to Flora, who nimbly alighted in her gathered-up riding-dress.

Then a tall gentleman came out, a gray-headed person with an air both grave and responsible, whom Mrs. Garretson at once recognized as a physician dwelling not far away.

The three stood for a moment peering into the carriage and murmuring together.

Mrs. Garretson brushed past Marion, hurrying forward.

"Dr. Wingate!" she exclaimed, "you're here? And Flora—Lydig—you've *driven* back? Where is Roland?"

Flora, white and agitated, hurried to her. "Oh, Cousin Eleanor!" she moaned.

"Where is Roland?" Almost dashing Flora aside, Mrs. Garretson swept on to the carriage door. "Where is Roland, I say!"

He was within the carriage, pale as the pillows on which his head rested, with tight-shut eyes, bluish-lidded, and a scarlet blotch on the rumpled linen just below his stretched-back throat.

VI.

For a long period of days it seemed to Eleanor Garretson as if she were living two lives,—one of burning and anxious spiritual concentration, one mechanical, automatic, scarcely conscious of its own movement or purpose. Her absences from Roland's bedside were brief, often almost momentary, except when need of sleep lengthened their intervals. There were trained nurses, comings and goings of physicians, but all this made no difference whatever. She had her post in the twilight of the sick-room, and she held it; nothing save dire physical collapse could have banished her thence. At first, when the gravest fears of his death from brain contusion were entertained, she wrote or telegraphed to this doctor or that with clear-headed executive firmness. In these trying times her chief aid was Marion. The girl was always haunting an anteroom, just within call, eager to give advice when desired, yet never intruding it. Flora overbrimmed with sympathy, but even to glance at her, as the heart-wrung mother once muttered below her breath, was to feel the incongruity of her presence where people were living out life instead of playing at it.

Marion, who overheard this relentless comment, could not find it in her conscience, just then, to offer a defensive response. For only a few hours before Flora had said to her, while screening a yawn with pretty but futile hypocrisy,—

"I really seem to be of so little use here just now. Of course I'm dreadfully worried, and all that. But Cousin Eleanor and you treat

me as if I were not needed, and I dare say you're both quite right. And while poor Roland is lying there, neither much better nor much worse, I do so feel my entire idleness. There is simply nothing for me to do. I can't read, of course; and, for that matter, I never was much of a reader. And to walk out all alone is so tedious. I wonder if . . ." And then Flora paused, looking wistfully at her sister for a second, before dropping her lovely eyes with a little fretful sigh.

Marion half guessed what was coming. But she made no reply, and soon Flora went on :

"They're quite sure, are they not, that he isn't going to die?"

"That danger seems to have passed."

"But he may not get well for a very long time?"

"He may not, in one sense, get well at all."

"Yes, . . . you spoke of it before: his brain may never—— Oh, poor Roland! It worries me so! I spend whole hours thinking about it."

"Were you thinking about it this morning and yesterday afternoon while you laughed and chatted with Lydig Pearsall?" said Marion, mild yet inflexible. "I chanced to get a glimpse of you on each occasion. And as for walking out alone, Flora, it seems to me that every day you go out with Mr. Pearsall and take a long stroll."

Flora began softly to cry. "Oh, Marion, how heartless you are! Do you want me to go crazy in this big, silent, melancholy house? If Lydig Pearsall comes here and asks for me, must I refuse to see him? I'm sure it would be most uncivil."

"It would be more natural, though, perhaps, if you did not see him quite so often or quite so long at a time. Have you told him, Flora, what you told me?—that you had promised, I mean, just before that unfortunate drive, to become Roland's wife?"

"No, I haven't," replied Flora, dashing away her tears (which were not numerous), while she vividly crimsoned. Here a new boldness, half hysterical, seemed to fire her. "I really cannot stand your reproaches, Marion, and those of Cousin Eleanor as well. You'll have me ill, between you, if you persist in making things as forlorn for me as you're both doing. You know very well, if *she* doesn't, that I'm not at all strong. Remember that illness I had at Madame Delacour's two years ago. It was nervous prostration, brought on by one of Madame's cruel scoldings, and I've had touches of it ever since. Cousin Eleanor has never forgiven me for going out on that skittish mare, and I suppose she never will. And certain chilling, wounding things that in all her grief she's found time to say have given me the deepest pain. And as for you, I sometimes dread to *look* at you, even, you're so full of silent accusation, of unmerciful rebuke."

"No, no, Flora; you must not think that." And Marion went nearer to the flushed, excited girl and took her hands fondlingly in her own, and smoothed her beautiful chestnut hair, with its threads of scintillance, and whispered soothing sentences in one of her shell-pink ears.

This was just the sort of treatment Flora desired. She had more or less expected it ever since she became tearful. At first she shrugged

her shoulders and looked inconsolable, unpropitiable. Then she permitted her sister's comforting overtures, and finally, with one hand, she began to finger a button on the front of Marion's gown.

"I'm glad—ever so glad—that you don't think me such a guilty wretch, after all. I—I was only having one of my mischievous fits when I resolved to ride Fantine. As if I dreamed what would happen! And as if I supposed he would come after us! And his saving my life—for there doesn't seem any doubt that he *did* save it—oh, I'm so deeply, deeply grateful for that! Perhaps, when he gets well, he'll want to break our engagement. But even if he does, I shall still feel just as devoutly thankful to him."

Marion listened in silence. She knew Flora so well! What was coming? Something characteristic,—probably something that Cousin Eleanor would have called fatally flippant,—it might be, something that merited the name of hard-grained selfishness, though smothered in a very eider-down of meek amiability.

"I—I received, Marion, such a long, sweet letter, to-day, from Rachel Rockford. I meant to read it you, but I haven't found the chance yet, dear; you're always so absorbed, preoccupied; you're always up-stairs near his room, waiting for Cousin Eleanor to steal out and talk with you. And no wonder, indeed, for you've a natural aptitude when any sort of sickness is in the air; I remember how the girls used to credit you with it and love you better because of it, there at school. Rachel Rockford (don't you remember?) used to call you the Sister of Mercy. And now Rachel has written me, as I said. I had told her of the accident, you know, and of my—my loneliness, my sense of inability to be of any real use, and all that. And Rachel writes so charmingly. She and her mother join in begging me to go there and stay with them for a fortnight. They're not in Philadelphia any longer; they've gone to their place at Elberon, not far away. . . You recollect hearing Rachel say what a delightful place it is. And, oddly enough, Lydig Pearsall is going on very soon, to the races at Monmouth. Elberon and Monmouth are quite near one another, and Lydig—Mr. Pearsall, I should say—has kindly proposed to accompany me, provided I start within two or three days."

The truth was out. Marion drew back a few steps from her sister and quietly faced her.

"I've only one answer to make you, Flora. Do not go."

Instantly Flora frowned and threw herself into an arm-chair. "I shall go!" she blustered, peevishly; "I shall! I shall! I'm worn out with this doleful place. Lydig Pearsall is going to the Monmouth races, and what on earth shall I do here, without a soul for company? I intend to start in two days from now—there!" And she flashed at her sister a look sparkling with contumacy.

"Very well," said Marion. "Do as you please. You will wound me beyond words, and you will mortally offend Cousin Eleanor. I've nothing more to say on the subject."

At once Marion left her, and the sisters did not again meet for several hours. When their next encounter took place, Flora greeted Marion with a grieved and accusing smile.

"You foolish thing!" she said. "Of course I never really meant to go. I was only trying you."

"Trying me?" faltered Marion. "How?"

"I wanted to see whether you would truly believe me capable of leaving dear Roland while he is yet so ill." Here her smile vanished, and a long, lingering sigh replaced it. "Yes, Marion dear, I've discovered that you are willing to think as badly of me as this. It's too sad,—too miserably depressing!"

Marion saw the tears again beginning, but this time they stirred in her amusement alone. Here was Flora's crafty little method of surrender. Well, how much better such unblushing duplicity than saucy revolt! For at any time, now, the doctors were saying, full consciousness might come back to Roland. And when it did come, would not hers be the first name on his lips?

Precisely thus it soon happened. Mrs. Garretson was seated at his bedside, holding his hand, and gratefully telling herself for the hundredth time that it was, oh, so much less feverish than the night before, when he opened his eyes (the large gray eyes with the purplish lights in them) and gently said,—

"How dark it is!"

"Yes, my boy," said his poor mother, trembling lest her very voice might startle him, "it is dark here; but you were ill, you know, and we thought it best to keep the room like this till you were better."

"Like this, mother? Why, there's nothing the matter with my eyes, is there?"

"Your eyes? Oh, no, no; of course not." (She totally failed to understand the question then, though it afterward recurred to her with piercing reminder.)

"Have I been ill?" Roland went on, a new strength seeming to nerve each new word.

"Yes."

One of the nurses, off in shadow, made a warning sign. The lady answered it with another. Very cautiously she continued,—

"But you're better now. Soon you will be quite well. Just lie quietly, and don't try to think very much about anything."

Slowly, after a silence, he said, "I remember it all, now. I fell from my horse. Is it long ago? As long ago as . . . yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Longer than that?"

"A . . . a little longer. You've been drowsy ever since."

The invalid's fingers pressed his mother's hand. "At death's door, I suppose you mean. Don't be afraid; it doesn't excite me to think I've been in great danger of dying. But one thing will excite me very much, now that I'm remembering just how my whole trouble came about. I want to know whether *she* is safe or not. I want to hear of Flora. I—I saw her jump off that devilish horse. Did she escape unhurt afterward?"

"Yes."

"Without a bruise or scratch of any sort?"

"With no injury whatever."

Another silence. Then, "I want to see her. I hope she isn't angry at me for following her like that."

"Angry! Oh, Roland, she will be overjoyed that you're better."

"I want to see her." His voice took a mildly imperative note. "I must see her. We—we're engaged to be married, you know, mother. Her place is here at my side. She was very wilful, that day, but then perhaps I, too, was blamable. Anyway, I'll let it all pass, if she will."

In the dusk Eleanor Garretson watched his face. The opening of the eyes had given it back that yearned-for look of life,—had shattered the blankness which had seemed midway between slumber and death,—had increased the intellectuality of outlines already sharpened by emaciation and pallor. Her heart hungered for the kisses which she had showered on him, day after day, while he slept that imperilling sleep, unconscious of their bestowal. His mention of Flora had kindled in her heart a scathing flame of jealousy. That feather-pated vixen, who had flung him where he now lay! But with steadied voice and the suavest of manners her answer came to him.

"Of course, dear Roland, I'll have her brought to you at once." And then she motioned, while rising, to the nurse with whom signals had just been exchanged.

Gliding quickly over to her side, the nurse whispered, "Of course, ma'am, if you think best; but isn't it a little soon yet?"

Before Mrs. Garretson could reply, Roland spoke from the bed:

"Look here, mother."

"Well, Roland?" She was at his side again in an instant.

"Do, please, light the room, will you? This sort of thing makes me positively creepy."

The nurse went to a broad window just opposite the bed, and opened the blinds, letting in a broad stream of sunlight.

"There," said Mrs. Garretson. "That's better, I'm sure."

"Better?" Roland murmured, vaguely.

"Too much light, dear, seemed to make you restless while you were ill, and, as we found the dimness quieting, we preserved it, like that, till you . . . became really wide awake, as now. This is pleasanter, is it not? But tell me if you find the sunshine too strong."

"Too strong?" Roland lifted himself on one elbow. He spoke with a queer, scared hollowness. "You can't be joking with me, mother?"

"Joking?"

"I—I see *nothing*. It's all pitchy darkness."

"Roland!"

She hurried toward him, and clutched both his hands. Her heart was throbbing so wildly that she felt as if it would burst from her breast.

With a strangled groan he sank back on the pillows. She heard him grind his teeth together, as if in mental anguish.

"Mother," he gasped, "bring me a lamp—a light of some sort—and put it close to me."

Mrs. Garretson turned a white face toward the nurse. There was a lamp on one of the near tables. Trembling, yet with efficient self-

control, the nurse lit it and came forward. She held it, firmly enough, within a few inches of Roland's face.

"There—there," said his mother. "You see this lamplight, do you not?" Her words ended in an irrepressible sob.

"I see nothing,—nothing. My God, mother, I'm—"

"No, no," she cried, loathing to hear the word.

"It's true." He gave a long, shuddering sigh, and closed the eyes that for two or three seconds past had been dilated in a wandering, despairful, infinitely piteous way.

"Inky blackness," he gasped. "Only that. I'm stone-blind."

VII.

"You must go in and see him, Flora," said Marion to her sister, about two hours afterward. "He is perfectly calm now, and has asked for you again and again."

Flora covered her face for a moment, visibly shivering. "Oh, Marion, it will be so dreadful!"

"Dreadful?"

"To have to talk with him, now he's like that! I declare, I shall feel like fainting dead away! And how shall I begin?"

Marion's white teeth closed on her under lip. She tried to keep back the insurgent cry that rose in her throat. Failing, she passionately said,—

"If you love him, you ought not to think such thoughts. You should long to meet him and tell him your great sorrow. The impulse to do so should overmaster all embarrassment. Indeed, there should be no embarrassment,—not a hint of it. You amaze—you mortify me, Flora, in speaking like this of the man you have promised to marry."

Flora gave a tremulous whimper. She was never spiteful; otherwise she might have thrown some caustic retort at her sister, suggestive of an attachment that she had long ago guessed.

"There, now, Marion, you make me worse. It does seem so strange that, after knowing me since we were both in bibs, you shouldn't realize what an unheroic, commonplace creature I am. As to caring for Roland, I'm awfully fond of him. Only I never could understand why he cared a bit for me, with his very superior brain and his great talents as a writer, and all that. If he had fallen madly in love with you, now, Marion dear, it would have been so much more appropriate,—so much more fitting and natural and . . ."

"Do go now, Flora, will you not? Remember, he is waiting for you."

"Yes—oh, yes—of course," fluttered the reply. "Will Cousin Eleanor be with us, did you say?"

"Cousin Eleanor is sleeping in her own room, under the influence of an anodyne the doctor gave her."

"Poor thing! She adores him so, doesn't she? How *will* she bear it?"

"Patiently, I think,—and hopefully. The first wildness of the shock has passed. And she has him still, you know, even though he may be blind for life."

"Yes, how true! She has him still." The buoyancy of Flora's nature now asserted itself. "And there's a strong chance, I dare say, that he will recover his sight."

"The two doctors who have examined his eyes say there is no chance whatever,—that the optic nerve, already weak, has become paralyzed from the injury to his head. But neither of these doctors is an oculist. Cousin Eleanor has sent for three of the best known in America. Two live in New York, one lives in Boston. There is little doubt that they will all three be here before to-morrow night, for the terms offered are not merely large, they are practically unlimited."

A little later Marion went with her sister to the door of Roland's chamber and almost pushed her inside. If she had had a temptation to listen, charity might surely have pardoned it with no great strain of clemency. But eavesdropping accorded quite as ill with her present melancholy mood as at all times it would have suited her moral ones.

Flora heard the door softly closed behind her. She looked about the room; it was full of sunny gayety. An arabesque of light lay on the floor; the lilac silk curtains at the two windows were swelling and pulsing in the fresh yet lazy breeze. Stretched on a large lounge, she saw Roland; his thinned and whitened face did not shock her half so much as the slow query and search of his eyes, moved in a groping way from side to side, while his head, slightly uplifted, kept time with their dreamy sway.

"Flora, is that you?"

He spoke in such dulcet, companionable tones that her dread vanished and she went quickly to his side. She bent over him, saying, "Yes, Roland, yes," and he wrapped her in his arms, and found her face, kissing it on lips, brow, and cheeks.

A chair was close to the couch,—perhaps left there by Marion; who shall say? Flora sank into it, and leaned over him, while their hands clasped and caressed one another.

A good many words passed between them. He was much calmer than she. Her copious tears seemed to give him a kind of halcyon relief. He listened for the audible tremors of her pity; he brushed her eyelids with his finger-tips, as though to test the loyal verity of their moisture.

"You think it a terrible affliction, my Flora," he at length said. "So do I; and yet every tear you shed for me is somehow alleviating. There's a sort of luxury in my sense of your sympathy. You're young, you know, dearest,—a good many years younger than I am. I can't help reminding myself that this fact might have repelled you."

"Repelled me? Oh, Roland, how could you dream that?"

He smiled, crushing one of her hands against his lips. "We shan't have to go over our betrothal again, then? No? That takes a great weight from my heart. Flora, I still dread to ask you the direct question, Can it, will it, make any difference in our marriage?"

He could not see her color fade.

"No difference; of course not, Roland." She stared blankly, for a minute, at one of the sun-bathed windows beyond them. "Besides, you must not forget that I have been the cause of your calamity."

He did not like that "besides," for some reason. It sent a faint spasm of pain across his features. "We spoke of this before, and I begged you never to let it vex or harass you. What happened, my love, was fate, pure and simple."

"My obstinacy, my whimsical defiance of your wishes," Flora musically bleated,—"that wasn't fate at all. I had my warning, and I snapped my fingers in the face of it."

"The nag bolted," bravely laughed Roland. "I stopped her, and if it hadn't been for that broken embankment I wouldn't have got my tumble. You see, I've been asking questions, I've been thinking the whole thing over, and I'm confident that bad luck is the only culpable agency in the whole forlorn affair. Then, too, this trouble is congenital, hereditary. I ought to have been more careful with my eyes, perhaps, in past years. I'd had monitions. There lay my weak spot, and disaster went for it. But I'm not formally convicted yet; my judge and jury haven't arrived. When they do come, and provided they give me a life-sentence after the trial is over . . . well, what's the Latin?—*non omnis moriar*. There will be *you* left me. I'm sure of that, eh? Lean over me, dear one, and put both arms about me, and whisper in my ear that there will still be you."

Flora obeyed him. A sudden trembling of the frame, from a new source vaguely definable even to herself, assailed her. But to Roland's ears came her answer, full of rich comfort, repeated many times at his murmured request,—

"Yes, there will be I. There will always be I."

"Thank God!" he said at length. "Thank God," he said again, more softly, but with deeper stress of meaning.

Flora dropped back into her chair, breathing soundlessly though with quick inhalations, and pierced by an abrupt terror of self-distrust.

VIII.

Two mornings later the sun shone over Widewood from a sky of ruffled pearl, and the wind came singing up from the Sound, with just enough of east in it to take away that sultriness which so often attends white summer haze. Marion was walking in a long path not far from a wing of the house, intensely privacied by huge masses of shrubbery on either side, almond, lilac, rose of Sharon, syringa, punctured with dark spires of our transatlantic cypress, the arbor vitæ, which will reach astonishing heights if left unclipped, all huddled together till some of their boughs nearly met overhead, and all haunted by the silvery staccatos of hidden birds.

This was a favorite walk of Mrs. Garretson's. Its retirement had pleased her on first returning, after so long an absence, to Widewood. She had been wont to stroll here while thinking of the threatened

pomp and circumstance of Newport, and wondering if her nervous energies would survive there a season of continuous and onerous chaperonage. An hour ago she had made with Marion a promise of tryst there. "When they've gone," she had said, "I shall want to see you,—to see you first, my darling, and tell you the verdict. Wait for me; I shall want to be alone with you; we can talk it over so much better in that leafy solitude. By eleven they will all have left: it's arranged, you know, that they shall all depart by that one train."

Midway the umbrageous walk a garden sofa nestled among the shrubberies' boughs and stems. Here Marion presently paused, and seated herself, with eyes fixed on the pages of an open book which she had read at least twenty times before. It was the last novel that Roland had published, and it teemed for her with beauty and charm. Just then there was nothing that she could understandingly have read. Indeed, the passages on which her gaze rested were already known to her almost by heart. She loved them for what seemed to her their rarity of artistic distinction, but she loved them still more because every sentence contained for her his individuality so strongly photographed and vocalized. They made her see and hear him in equal measure. They were his way of putting things when at his discursive best. His voice went with them, and his portrait evolved itself perpetually, as a memorial accompaniment of the voice. Always to sit like this, reading what she recollected for the most part without needful aid of the printed line, produced in her a delicate enthralment whence the lapse into positive absorption was relatively facile. And so, when the sound of a footstep on the path came to her, it broke a distinct spell. She rose, hugging her book, and went out upon the walk with dazed senses which the first view of Mrs. Garretson's face, wan and strained, made clear as if wrought so by the clang of an alarm-bell.

"The doctors have gone?" she said.

"Yes."

"And before going they spoke finally?"

"Yes."

"Is there hope?"

"None."

"He . . . he will be blind for life?"

"Blind for life."

Marion drew Roland's mother toward the little embowered sofa. To her surprise, Mrs. Garretson looked quite tranquil.

"The decision, Marion, is beyond dispute," she said, in a voice of correspondent calm. "They all three concur. The optic nerve is paralyzed. One of them said to me just now, 'Madam, we can help nature as long as she consents to help herself. When she refuses, we can do nothing.'"

The two women sat and stared into each other's eyes. Suddenly Mrs. Garretson's swam in tears and her chin twitched.

"I know of what you're thinking, Marion. Have I told him yet? Oh, no need of that. He made the doctors speak right out; he would have no periphrastic speech, no euphemisms. And he bore it all with a sublime composure." Here she knotted her hands, and a tragic flash

seemed to dry her tears. "He has courage enough; I could have counted on his manliness of character, his hate of all cowardly shirkings. But this is something finer; it's an actual holiness of resignation. As if I don't know what lies at the root of it! He seized an occasion to whisper in my ear, 'Oh, mother, there are recompenses, after all. I still have your love—and hers.' I felt, somehow, from his tones, that I was merely given a kind of polite priority. It was she—entirely she—of whom he was thinking."

"Ah," struck in Marion, with consolatory fervor, "say that he was thinking of you both!"

"Both!" scoffed the hearer, though with a gesture more melancholy than contemptuous. "She went to him and pressed his hand and kissed him on the lips, and even blindness became bearable. But how long, Marion," the unhappy lady continued, with a sceptic wildness breaking through her sorrowful quiet, "how long can such a fool's paradise last for him? I used to be proud—it was a pardonable pride, you'll admit—on the subject of Flora's ever refusing him. But now—it would be a mercy if she did refuse him! For in the end her companionship would have to face a stern test, and fail utterly in surviving it."

"Not, surely, Cousin Eleanor, if he still loves her."

"Would he go on loving her? She tricked his sense of beauty,—nothing more; and she is beautiful, I admit. But the permanence of her power over him must necessarily mean the permanence of his eyesight. That is destroyed. Suppose she consents to become his wife—"

"But she has consented."

"For the time, yes. Suppose her acquiescence holds out. What will result? For him, horrible disappointment; for her, a bondage irksome and loathed."

Collected, but drearily pale, Marion reached forth a hand, plucked from the wall of living greenery at her side a pearly spray of syringa blossoms, and held them against nostrils and lips. Keenly, to the core of both reason and sensibility, she felt that Mrs. Garretson's words were true.

"And yet," she said, in reverie-like voice, as though she were debating some point urged by her own thoughts, "prophecy, in a case like this, might turn out the sheerest fallacy." Then, with tender impetuosity, she turned again toward her friend. "Conquer your antipathy to Flora, if it deserves a name so hard. Try, with me, to impress upon her the duty that destiny has bidden her perform. I will aid you; she is young in mind as in years. We will work together, and we may accomplish much. In smaller causes I have often won her over before now. Of course the marriage will be delayed for months yet. Who knows? we may achieve marvels. Let it be a little educating, elevating conspiracy between you and me. Promise! She will constantly witness our devotion to him,—the reverence in which we hold his affliction, his martyrdom. Let us take time, let us insist upon time, in teaching her the seriousness, the gravity, the high dignity and responsibility, of her future bond."

In the shade where they sat a deeper shade seemed to cloud Eleanor Garretson's visage. For an instant her lips appeared to writhe with some unspoken irony. She leaned backward, pressed both hands against her sight, and then dropped them helplessly in her lap.

"Grapes from thistles,—no!" In a second her looks brightened and there came to her a smile of desolate wistfulness. "In such an office I should miserably break down. Attempt it yourself, Marion, if you choose, but I dare not let you count me in." Hesitating for a moment, she tumultuously proceeded. "And do you know why failure would clog every effort I made? Because I am jealous,—bitterly jealous. I never wanted to give him to a girl like that. I can't help the feeling; it's an inseparable part of me,—it's been so for years. Ah, Marion, if he could only turn to you, cling to you, in this awful hour! Renunciation of him, then, would be almost a pleasure. For to take the second place in his heart, you know, must for me always mean renunciation. Ah, Marion, Marion, the to-morrows look as blind to me in one way as they do to him in another. But if I only had you to front them with me!"

"You have, Cousin Eleanor. Why should you dream that you have not?"

"Ah, not as I mean!—not as I want!" And here the miserable woman quite broke down, throwing her arms about Marion, and sobbing with head low-bowed upon her strong young shoulder.

IX.

Roland was no sooner able to leave his room than delightful weather permitted him to leave the house as well. He took frequent walks about the grounds of Widewood, sometimes with Otway, an elderly body-servant of whom he had long been fond and who had gone with him on many foreign wanderings, but much oftener with either his mother or Flora. The news of his disaster had travelled widely. Cards were left by all the neighbor "gentlefolk," none of whom Mrs. Garretson trusted herself to see. Only the Pearsalls, mother, son, and daughter, came over more intimately; for Mrs. Pearsall was perhaps the sole dweller near by whom long foreign sojourns had not estranged from all informal relations with the mistress of Widewood. Lydig's visits were always paid alone, and these always happened to be of a kind (as Marion soon noticed) in which Flora was "discovered" either on piazza or lawn. Roland, moreover, did not then chance to be in her sister's society, whether such absences were or were not a matter of calculated precision. One thing had meanwhile grown certain: Roland, in spite of having received from his former friend expressions of the most ardent condolence, had revealed for him the strongest dislike. More than once he had treated Lydig with an apathetic coldness, and twice he had had himself led away from the young man's company with hardly even an apologetic monosyllable. Jealousy, in these dismally peculiar circumstances, would prove indeed

a most woful occurrence; and yet the more that Marion dreaded the existence of such a fresh harm the more she grew certain of its perverse thrift. She hated to question Flora, though in spite of reluctance the truth was borne in upon her through unmistakable omens. Beyond doubt Roland kept himself instructed concerning every visit that Pearsall paid. Once she overheard him say in morose tones to Flora, as one of their strolls began, "I don't want to tire you, for I happen to know that you had a long walk with that fellow, Lydig Pearsall, before lunch." And that same day Flora mounted the steps of the piazza, about an hour later, with Roland's arm in her own, but a bored and irritated look marring the pink anemone of her face. Again, as they entered the door of the library, one morning, with her hand clasped guidingly about his, she heard Flora say, in a pettish falsetto,—

"But I can't; I'm sure I can't. I'm such a wretched writer. Even a letter of more than two pages will often get me so nervous that I can scarcely finish it."

"That is different," said Roland, amiably, and as if far more diverted than repelled. "It will only be dictation with you now; and, remember, you told me that you greatly wanted me to try and dictate the remainder of my novel to an amanuensis."

"An amanuensis, yes," Flora answered, as they passed out of Marion's hearing, and while she led him to an easeful chair which he would sometimes occupy, nowadays, without speaking a word unless some one addressed him, for one or two hours at a time. "But I meant a capable person, Roland, and I'm wretchedly far from being anything of the sort."

He reached out both arms, and, well aware of the longing this gesture implied, she drooped over him and filled, as it were, the vacant embrace. He smoothed her hair, seeing its browns and golds, perhaps, with the eyes of his spirit. "You're the most capable person I could possibly employ, Flora. A stranger would tire me past words. If there be such a state as that of inspiration, your presence, the occasional sound of your voice, the scraping of your pen on the paper beside me, would surely call it forth."

"But, Roland, your mother—"

He smiled, and there crossed his brows a reminded, self-forgetful look. "Oh, yes; mother would serve me most satisfactorily, of course. But then remember, Flora, what suffering it might cost her. She has not your youth; she has known me for so many years in full possession of my sight; she has been so ambitious about my scribblings and so anxious for me to persevere in them. Oh, no, it would be cruel to make her play such a part. Afterward, when the ice has been broken, when she becomes accustomed to seeing you in the *rôle* of my secretary, it would be quite a different affair."

Flora sank into a despondent little heap on the floor at his feet.

"Roland," she said, softly.

"Well, my love?"

"I've—I've a confession to make you. I'm dreadfully shaky, sometimes, in my spelling."

"Are you?" And Roland, who had never laughed loudly since a certain day, came near doing so now. "Who cares, Flora? It will all go to a typewriter afterward if you please, and he'll never know what scribe preceded him."

"But my punctuation, Roland, is a chaos!"

"Oh, I'll give it you, commas, periods, semicolons, colons, just as I go along. That is," he added, with an abrupt sombreness of aspect and a smothered sigh, "provided I'm able to go on with my work at all. Heaven knows if I can. There are moments when the task seems colossally hard."

As if a little conscience-stricken by those last words, Flora rose and made preparations at the big writing-table which spread itself accusingly near. "Shall you want me to read over any part of the manuscript?" she asked. "Say the last chapter?"

"Oh, no," he answered. "It's all clear in my memory,—clearer than ever."

Flora gave a visible but soundless yawn of relief. "Oh, very well, then," she said, looking down at a large blank sheet of foolscap. "You'll begin dictating at once, then?"

"At once, yes," returned Roland, with accents of painful satire, throwing back his head and putting a hand to either temple.

A long silence followed. At length Roland began to speak. He had nearly finished a sentence, when he stopped short and said,—

"Don't write that. Don't write anything, dearest, till I tell you to begin."

"I was just going to begin," said Flora, meekly. "It sounded so melodious and graceful,—just like print. The best sort of print, I mean, of course. Yours, you know."

Roland flushed hopefully. "Do you think so?" he said, in tones that betrayed a sort of agitated encouragement. "Well, then, let it stand. Write it, I mean, Flora." He repeated the half-sentence just as he had before spoken it, and then supplemented it with another clause, fluently phrased.

But later dictation was far less facile. He had plunged himself into a dim sea of method and process where no beacon of experience could guide him. His style as a writer had never verged on the colloquial, and whether or not it merited the charge given by certain detractors that it was labored and ultra-subtle, he was undoubtedly an author who had never written as he talked. Flora sometimes found herself erasing whole paragraphs, and the striking out of certain words and the substitution of others became for her a constant task. Of all things the use of a pen was the most irksome occupation to her; she held it as wholly detestable, and had been famous at school for her slovenly handwriting, not to mention her precarious spelling. She knew now that she had made several grave blunders, but she was ashamed to question Roland concerning the proper way of avoiding them. This excited and irritated her so keenly that she had to keep close guard on her tongue lest it should betray her into some cross utterance.

At last Mrs. Garretson glided inquiringly into the room, and Flora

threw both arms over her "copy" in a species of mortified fright. This attempt at concealment could not well have been more imprudent. The mother, with a face all rack and pallor, looked almost sternly at Flora, while she went up to her son and touched his arm.

"I see, Roland, that you are letting Flora write for you. Is this—the first time?" She could scarcely manage her voice; a sudden paroxysm of grief menaced her. But with great effort (she was growing used to such efforts now) she had swallowed her tears and steeled her nerves.

"Yes, mammy," he said, "it's the first time."

A pang of jealousy cleft the mother's heart. She looked, for a moment, full at Flora. "I hope," she said, "that it's nothing very private. One would suppose so, however, from the way in which Flora hides it."

The girl blushed violently. "Oh," said Roland, "it's only an attempt at dictation. I've been trying, you know, to do a new chapter in this way."

"A new chapter on your novel?" The words leaped forth, querulous and dismayed. "Oh, Roland, who could help you—really help you—but I? And yet you never even spoke of it! You—"

Sharply she checked herself. Only a few minutes ago she had held it impossible that any shade of reproach could mar her treatment of this son, so devoutly treasured, so infinitely pitied. With the pathos of deep self-rebuke in her tone, she continued,—

"Forgive me, dear boy, if I seem too sensitive on this point. But I'm sure you will understand my meaning."

"I hardly think I do," said Roland, with a coldness that stabbed her.

At this Flora rose from the table. She had gathered her late work into a roll, and on her face there was a look both perturbed and fatigued.

"It seems to me, Roland," she said, "that your mother is quite right. If you will let me, I'll go out into the air for a little while. It is rather warm in here, and I should like to get a few fresher breaths out on the piazza."

Roland, before her words ended, had risen also. His recent blindness still left all his movements touchingly helpless.

"No: stay, Flora," he said. But apparently she had not heard him, having slipped at a rather fleet pace from the room.

"Did you want her?" said his mother, taking one of his outspread hands. "Shall I call her?"

"Has she gone, then?" His hand lay passive in his mother's clasp.

"Yes. She could not have heard you."

"Ah," said Roland, turning on the speaker his sightless eyes, vacant, yet large, limpid, and still a very beautiful feature of his face, "I'm afraid you frightened her away."

"Frightened her? I?"

"Yes. She made a very timid amanuensis; but then I was a wretched dictator."

"That feather-brain," thought Mrs. Garretson, with acrid self-

torment, "to concern herself in *his* mental struggles at a time like this!" But aloud she said, very tenderly and winningly,—

"Don't you think, Roland, that you need some one more familiar—that is, you know, at the beginning—with your habits of verbal expression, your preferences and tendencies in the way of style, your natural fall of phrase? Flora's intelligence"—the two nouns almost choked her—"cannot be quite suggestive enough just now, while you are on the threshold, so to speak, of this new oral change."

"Flora seems to me stimulating," he answered, "in a certain way explainable, I suppose, only through sympathy." Then, perhaps because he felt the hand that grasped his own faintly tremble, or perhaps through the impulse of kindly after-thought, he added,—

"Of course you, dear mother, would make an ideal amanuensis. But still, notwithstanding my wretched trouble, I'm in love with Flora, you know, just the same."

"Yes, yes," she replied, from the depths of an aching heart; "I understand perfectly."

"I've told you," he went on, "of how that lovely girl is willing to be my wife, just as if—nothing had happened." A dim red here tinted his cheeks, and he smiled with a sort of dreamy brightness. "I have hours, mother, of such intense gratitude to her."

"Gratitude, Roland? Why, if she loves you—"

"Ah, I know what you are going to say," he broke in. "But there are so many girls—young, healthful, ambitious, with all life's choicest promises and chances before them—who would have recoiled. You must grant this. I feel it, value it, in the most acutely comforting way. There are times when I tell myself that if she had recoiled I must either have died of sheer despair or killed myself because of its intolerable sting."

Eleanor Garretson listened with bowed head. Her jealousy had vanished now,—at least for the time. She was full of inward shudders; it seemed to her as if she saw her son on the verge of some steep cliff, with only a slender sapling to clutch at and keep him from falling. This *flibbertigibbet* drive him to death,—to suicide! It was monstrous! And if indeed she did "recoil," as there was every probability that she might, to think of what anguish her insignificance would have power to cause!

"But something often haunts me," Roland went on,—"haunts me painfully, mother. Shall I tell you what it is?" He looked hesitant, ruminant, dolorous, and then hastily continued: "I mean Lydig Pear-sall. He has such an opportunity now. My blindness creates it. Not that I think she really cares for him. How could this be possible after what she has told me? No? But then she is so young, and he has all the tricks of a trained flirt at his finger-ends. . ."

He did not appear, this same gentleman, to be by any means thus adroitly gifted, while he strolled with Flora, at the very minute Roland was discussing him, through a tract of long, dry midsummer grass, off on a secluded stretch of the Widewood lawns.

It had been a kind of appointment. She had told him that she

would meet him this afternoon, provided other "duties" did not interfere, and he had understood what "duties" meant, and had taken for granted that "meet" would be to join him at a distance from the house, just as she had lately done several times before, glimpsing his figure while he strolled among a cluster of rather far-away maples.

He was mild and genial now as the declining day itself. A certain flavor of tartness, even acerbity, had pleased and amused her in him at other times, but to-day she did not note a trace of it.

"You must have been bored to death," he said, when she had described, with mournful humor, recent occurrences in the library. "I wonder if he caged you like that, pretty bird that you are, because he's taken such a hatred to me."

"Oh, not at all," said Flora, solemnly. "And you must not believe he hates you."

"Mustn't I, indeed?" grumbled Pearsall, with a resumption of his cynic vein. "Of course, if he kicked me, poor chap, I'd have to take it as meekly as a hand-shake. But, really, the last time I met him—when I'd just returned from the Monmouth races, you know—he as good as informed me that my turning up here at Widewood was a disagreeable surprise."

Flora said nothing. Her gaze was lowered on the thick, satin spears of the grass, full for the passing foot of a delicate evening coolness, and netted, here and there, with gold filaments of sunshine.

"I've been here more than once," Pearsall resumed, "as you're aware. But we've never met again, and I've no wish that we shall meet again. He used to be a good enough fellow, and I suppose, on the whole, it's marvellous that he hasn't cut his throat."

"Oh, how *can* you?" shivered Flora.

"Perhaps the thought of his mother keeps him from it; he was always such a model son that he's been the cause, for me, of many a maternal scolding. And then, too, the suddenness of his infirmity may have prevented him from finding the proper instrument of self-destruction."

Flora drew backward, with a harsh frown. "You talk brutally," she reprimanded. "You talk as men do at races. You are too much at races. No wonder your mother scolds you for not being a gentleman."

She snatched from a drooping branch a spray of great ragged maple-leaves, and began to tear, between feverish fingers, their sheeny fan-shaped emerald.

He stood for a while with averted face, gnawing his lips. Then, turning toward her, he said, torpidly,—

"You're right. I've got a nasty tongue. I suppose it was born in me. When I'm with you it seems tamer, somehow. I apologize if I've said anything to wound you."

"Wound me! You've spoken most cruelly of the man I've promised to marry."

He faced round upon her with compressed lips. "Flora!"

"Miss Kirkland, if you please."

"Flora," he persisted, austerely, "you told me, while Roland was

ill—you continued to tell me even after they said he would live—that on the day you rode Fantine you had made this—this pact with him."

Flora nodded, with drooped head.

"And I never afterward denied it," she murmured.

"So . . . you . . . are engaged still?" Pearsall jerked out the words, half haughtily, half accusingly.

Flora bridled, both rearing her head and tossing it.

"He has offered to free me. What could I do but refuse to let him?"

"What could you do?" smotheredly groaned her hearer. He made two or three steps toward her, then paused. "What could you do but that?" he resumed, in an imperious fret. "Of all things it was the most madly quixotic."

She looked at him askance, with pert revolt. "From your stand-point."

"From any sane person's."

"Would you actually have me throw him over because he had been stricken by a great misfortune?"

"Things like that can be—managed," he said, pulling his moustache. "In offering to free you he saw the wild folly of allowing this engagement to go on. You could have made him some demurring answer."

"He'd have construed it but in one way. Oh, he's very keen where I am concerned."

Pearsall watched her distracting profile, with its low brow, its long, upcurving eyelash, its red bend of joined lips close to the shapely if unclassic nose, and its pearly little bulb of chin, with a dim glimpse of one central dimple.

"Why shouldn't he be?" came the young man's reply. "It would take ten thousand years of blindness to make *me* forget you."

A flattering sun-shaft struck out all the hidden gold in Flora's tresses as she quickly turned toward him her full face. But it also flashed on a tear or two at the same instant.

"Oh, don't make me pretty speeches," she pleaded; "I'm in no mood for them. Perhaps you are right, and it is a madness. And then he's so clever, so far above me in the qualities of mind and thought."

"Yes," said Pearsall, with one of his grim, swift smiles. "You should never marry above you, in *that* way."

She flung him a cloudy look.

"I may say those things myself about myself, but the instant you agree with them you become ungentlemanly."

"I know it, and I wasn't a bit serious," he said, with every line in his face jocosely softened. "You can't doubt, by this time, that I think you as bright as a button. But your kind of brightness would never wear with him. He doesn't want the brightness of buttons; he wants that of electrics. A blue-stockings, a literary woman, might get on with him matrimonially, now that he's blind, poor fellow. But you! You're not a blue-stockings or a literary woman; you're fifty times finer; you're a sensible, human, natural girl."

"I'm a very ordinary person indeed," retorted Flora, brokenly.

"No, I won't have that!" As Pearsall finished his contradiction he had got so near to her that their garments brushed against one another. "To me you're the loveliest creature in the universe. 'Ordinary' is the most ridiculous term you could apply to yourself. But he would make you so, and devilish quick (excuse me), if you married him. He'd turn you into a drudge, a slave, a nonentity, before two years of marriage had passed. I'd never have said a word if this horrid disaster hadn't fallen on him. I'd have crushed back my love, and never let a breath of it, a sign of it, leave me. But now all's changed. He would have been a great match for you; now it's mockery to call him one. I wasn't so bad a *parti* myself, if the hateful but needful question of worldly goods were consulted. Dad left me a half-million when he died, in cool cash, and a lot of real estate that's slowly turning itself into live dollars. Still, it's been 'hats off' with me while he paid you court. Now, though, I can speak out, and I will speak out."

He caught one of her hands. She made a feint of drawing it away. But he tightened his clasp on it while he went on:

"Flora, I love you; it all comes to that. Somehow—perhaps I'm wrong—we seem to get on together in the jolliest, nicest way. How shall it be, dear girl? Will you give me the mitten right off, and send me about my business, or will you take me for one of the best and truest of husbands, after making me, by a round, sweet, unmistakable 'yes,' the luckiest of lovers?"

She gave a gesture of reluctance, hesitation, despair. Then, in a moment, as it swept through her mind that for some reason she had liked him from the very first, and that all his hardness, bluntness, occasional rather underbred egotism, had piqued her into admiring him against her will, she grew certain that she had never cared at all for Roland, and that all his charms of personal grace, native refinement, virile sweetness, had been powerless to touch her heart or enthrall her feminine senses.

A fervor of surrender seized her, as Pearsall's bold lips touched her own. Then conscience grew reassertive, and she struggled to escape from his arms.

"No, no; I must not!—I dare not!"

"You've never really loved him, Flora. And now for you to marry him would be horrible, inhuman. No one need know, for weeks and weeks yet, that we're engaged. There will be no Newport now, of course. There will only be Widewood, till far into the autumn. And all this time we can think it over, we can brood, plan, manage, advise with one another, make surer and surer that we were born for one another, and that no real barrier could ever be built between us... Flora!"

"Well?" she answered him, her cheek burning against his, her breathings a chain of gasps.

"Am I not right? Would it not all be a torturing masquerade?"

"Perhaps, perhaps!"

"Perhaps? Certainly—indisputably! You know, my darling, that you could never do it. You'd die at thirty."

"Better if I were dead now!" she cried, her tears a sudden stormy rain.

"You little goose!" almost shouted Pearsall. Then, with softened voice, "If you loved me you couldn't speak so." He released her from his arms, and swerved away, with hanging hands and low-bent head.

She hurried after him. "I do love you! I have nothing but pity for him, and I never cared for him even before his blindness came. Something must be done. I can't go on with it like this. To-day has made me desperate. They've got to help me,—Marion, I mean, and his mother. But if *you* turn against me now, I don't know what wild thing I may do. I might even—"

"Turn against you? I?"

Pearsall swung round, and once more wrapped her in his embrace.

"Go to the Rockfords at Elberon," he said, "and I'll follow you there in a day or two. That will give you a fortnight of rest at least. Insist on going. Say you're ill,—anything. There must be some sort of break. Let Marion and his mother ease matters to him as best they can. Tell them the whole truth. Why not—why not? Far best you should. If you don't, Flora, now that I know you love me, I'll take the whole sorry business into my own hands, and tell them myself—I vow I will."

X.

Twilight had begun when Flora went up-stairs to her room that evening. It adjoined the room of Marion; a door, nearly always kept open, connected them.

Flora stood at one of her two large windows facing westward. An immense tract of trees, looking as if some necromantic chisel had sculptured them from ebony with miraculous cunning, stood up against a sky of airy ruby, where odd-shaped clouds were floating, like little purple gondolas. A step sounded behind Flora: she knew it was her sister's, but she did not turn.

"What a lovely evening, Marion, isn't it?"

"Perfect. Shall you dress for dinner?"

"No. This frock will do. I suppose Cousin Eleanor will not object."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Marion. "I only wanted to remind you that you're rather late."

Something in Marion's voice made Flora nervously clasp her hands together. She was wringing them with restrained vehemence as she said,—

"No doubt you mean that Roland has missed me,—been asking for me."

"I believe he has been doing both."

Flora flung her hands apart, and stood in a posture of comely

weariness. "I can't help it; I just went away, and stayed away,—that's all."

"You went and you stayed, Flora, with Lydig Pearsall."

"I—I hate to think you spied upon us, Marion. It wouldn't be like you."

"It wouldn't, in the circumstances, have been spying. I had a right to know whether or not you were keeping an appointment with Mr. Pearsall. As it happened, I saw you meet him from the window, here, of my own room."

From the open door of this same room Mrs. Garretson now entered. In the clear yet dusky light she saw both girls facing one another.

"Oh, you're both here," she said, faintly.

"I've been home only a few minutes, Cousin Eleanor," said Flora, with a note of placid boldness in her tone.

"We knew you were not in the house,—that you had gone somewhere," Mrs. Garretson returned. She spoke with a constrained melancholy.

"I had gone," said Flora, "for a walk with Lydig Pearsall." She looked straight into Mrs. Garretson's face. "I think I ought to tell you this."

Marion went quickly toward her sister. "Flora, dinner will be served very soon. We, remember, now make up the family group, as it were." She tried to smile, dismally failing. "Cousin Eleanor will dine, for some time yet, with Roland."

Mrs. Garretson gave a shrill, bitter little laugh. "You mean, Marion, that I literally put the food into my son's mouth, and shall perhaps continue to do it for months hereafter. Unless—" and now she gave Flora a hard stare—"somebody else may take my place."

"Who could take it half so efficiently?" said Flora.

"You, in his opinion," answered Mrs. Garretson, "I haven't a doubt."

Dead silence followed. Flora broke it, with an odd blending of resolution and regret.

"He overrates me; he has always done that."

"He loves you," murmured Roland's mother. Her voice heightened and hardened, accusingly. "And before he lost his sight you told him that you would marry him. Since then you have repeated your promise." She lifted one finger and shook it at Flora; she had grown very pale; her lips were dragged down at their corners, and she seemed to use only the middle parts of them while she spoke, clipping each word from the other as though between the blades of a shears.

"I hope," she went on, "that you revere the sacredness of that promise. To behave as you are doing, however, challenges an opposite inference."

Flora closed her eyes for a second. She trembled, and caught the back of a near chair, steadyng herself. Marion slipped toward her.

"No, Marion, thanks. I'm quite firm, dear. It was only for a moment that I felt as if I couldn't get through with it. But now I see that I must, and that this is the best time. I'd intended to tell

you at once. Then—it was cowardly, perhaps, but I'd thought of asking you to tell Cousin Eleanor. . . . Cowardly, I say, because it's the right word,—because I'm weak in character, and have always known myself quite unworthy to be the wife of a man like Roland."

"And you expect sympathy for such weakness?" flashed Mrs. Garretson. "I, for one, am not prepared to give it you."

Flora's clutch upon the chair at her side tightened.

"I did not expect it, Cousin Eleanor."

"When my Roland was himself—when he was a match any girl might be proud of—you accepted him. You had no thought, then, of doing more than mischievously flirt with Lydig Pearsall."

"Lydig Pearsall had never asked me to marry him then."

"And he has asked you now?" cried Mrs. Garretson, with a kind of terror breaking through her tones. "And you've— Oh, Flora Kirkland, what falsehood, what hypocrisy! You may well call yourself cowardly."

"Cousin Eleanor," Marion appealed, with supplicating eagerness, "Flora has not said that she has engaged herself to Lydig Pearsall."

Mrs. Garretson pointed with a grieved sneer at the form of Flora, which had now sunk into the chair whose back she had been grasping. The girl had drooped her head, but she quickly raised it and met Mrs. Garretson's arraigning look.

"I have promised to marry Lydig Pearsall. I respected Roland, and in a manner he always charmed me. But I never loved him, and I do love Lydig. To Roland I would have been faithful before his dreadful illness came, but afterward I realized the impossibility of keeping my word to him. The strain is beyond my powers. It has horrified me to think of all that he will demand of me. I cannot fulfil the obligation made by these altered circumstances. I—I want to go away from Widewood; I want to go and stay with the Rockfords at Elberon. I—"

"And have Lydig follow you there?" almost wailed Mrs. Garretson. She was wretchedly excited. She flung herself across the floor to where Flora sat, and caught with tense hand one of the girl's wrists. "Oh, my God, do you know what you will do? You will kill him!"

"It will not be I, Cousin Eleanor, even if so dreadful a thing happens."

"Not you?—not you?" . . . Passionately Mrs. Garretson threw back on Flora's lap the hand whose wrist she had clasped. "Don't call me cousin. You have brought nothing but misery and torture here from the first. My Roland blind, I'd have you know, is worth a thousand of that stableman, that jockey, that clod. If you go to the Rockfords, never return to my house,—never!"

"Do not be alarmed," said Flora, white and shivering: "I shall not."

The other pointed to a door that led hallward. "Go and tell him before you leave Widewood. He is asking for you,—expecting you. It is only fair that you should let him know you're shamelessly false to him. I have neither the courage nor the cruelty to strike him such a blow. It is your place, not mine; I love him to idolatry, as you're

well aware. If telling him the truth would make him despise you, I'd not shrink from it, be sure!"

The wrath of wounded maternity was tempestuous with Eleanor Garretson. Ordinarily a lovable, sweet-mannered woman, this clash of circumstance, from which her worshipped son emerged not merely a physical but a mental martyr, had shot into her peaceful veins a fierceness wholly new. It seemed to her as if the gods had been merciless enough to smite her boy at all, but there was the hate of fiends in this twofold persecution.

She walked now, with a staggering step, toward the door at which she had just pointed. Marion flew to detain her, cast an arm about her waist, and forcibly pressed her into a chair, sinking down at her side the next moment.

"Cousin Eleanor, you can't mean what you have just said to Flora!"

"I will go," Flora here said, determinedly, rising and looking about the room with a bewildered eye-sweep. "You must help me to pack all my things this evening, Marion," she went on. "I will start by as early a train to-morrow as I can manage. I will take our maid, Ellen, if you don't object. She can come back to you afterward. The Rockfords will give me all the service I need."

Marion's gaze, riveted on Mrs. Garretson's wan, embittered face, burned with entreaty.

"Beg her to stay a little longer," she whispered. "You once told me I had wisdom, Cousin Eleanor. You have spoken too angrily,—too harshly."

"No, no," said Flora, overhearing; "Mrs. Garretson meant every word. I shall go. I pity her misery, just as I pity his, and I feel that hers, in a way, is even worse than his. But I cannot stay, now. I do not speak altogether from pride, though it is true that I am deeply hurt. But my going has become a necessity; it will even be a flight."

"And a most shameless one," sped from Roland's mother, struggling to her feet.

"Ah," said Flora, "I am not alone lacking in shame."

"You wish to be petted, indulged, excused!" exclaimed Mrs. Garretson, her features now contorted more by anguish than resentment. "All stonily selfish people are that way, and you are stonily selfish. . . No, no, Marion; don't try to detain me, my dear. I must go to him; I must tell him the frightful truth; delay will be totally useless. I must say to him, 'Roland, the girl you love has deserted you in your hour of dark distress. Tear her out of your life, if you can, for she wanted you prosperous and healthful and famous, and she treats the loss of your sight as coldly as she would have treated the loss of your money. In God's name, my boy, despise her when you hear that she has plighted herself to the next richest man she could find, and as speedily as the chance came to her, even while the assurances that she would not leave you were still warm on her lips.' This I shall say, this I must say, and watch his agony while he hears it!"

She had kept her haggard eyes, full of sickly flashes, on Flora till

her voice panted itself to a pause. Then she took some hurried steps nearer the door, though Marion clung to her with a wild, clogging strength.

"No, no, Cousin Eleanor! You must not break the news to him suddenly, like that. Wait, wait; I implore you to wait. Flora will wait, too,—for a few days at least. During that time we will tell him that she is ill,—that he cannot meet her because of some sudden sickness."

Mrs. Garretson ceased to resist the girl's detaining grasp. She stood quite still, and looked glacially across the twilit room at Flora.

"More falsehood, Marion? And to what earthly purpose?"

"To gain those few days. Not to let this thunderbolt break on him so suddenly. You yourself have said that it might kill him. Think."

"I yield, then, on my side," said Mrs. Garretson, after a slight silence. Her look was still on Flora's form, seen with dusky acuteness, now, against the roseate after-glow wide-framed by the window just beyond her. "Does your sister yield on hers?"

Flora lifted one hand, impetuously shaking it. "No, no," she replied. "I must go to-morrow."

Marion glided over to her. The eyes of the sisters met. With the firmness of intense command in her gentle tones, with a resolution strangely imperious in her quiet attitude, Marion said,—

"You shall not go to-morrow. You shall not leave Widewood till you are no longer needed here."

XI.

These twins, so oddly alike yet so oddly dissimilar, had lived together, since early childhood, a tranquil and unquarrelsome life. Still, there had been times when Marion, the elder, had felt called upon to edge disapprobation with authority, and veto where before she had simply condemned. At such times Flora had almost stood aghast; for she not only loved her sister with whatever capacity for ample affection lay in her spiritual range and mould, but she respected her with an instinctive sense of inferiority that genuine reverence flavored.

Marion had long possessed a certain power of restriction and enforcement over Flora, and knew it. Her exertions of it, through both their young lives, had thus far been rare, for her native sapience and discretion had assured her that to employ it often might nullify its potency. Perhaps she had already formed the idea that it might be needed for some future *grand coup*. If so or not, tenacity and rigor had now grown swiftly manifest in her mood, and these, while partly a surprise to herself, nerved her with the awakening of new security and confidence.

"I demand this of you, Flora," she went on, "and if you have your will instead of following mine, so much the worse."

"You threaten me, Marion?"

"Yes," was the unrelaxing answer.

"How? With what?"

"I will tell you presently,—when we are alone."

Mrs. Garretson, at Marion's look, instantly left the room, closing the door behind her.

Hearing this sound of departure, Flora shook her head with hysterical negation.

"I see: we're alone now. But I will not consent. As my sister, you should not even ask it,—apart from demanding it. I will not act a falsehood by having Roland told that I am ill—"

"Ah, you forget that you have already not only acted but spoken a falsehood by telling him you would still remain his *fiancée*."

"You catch me up like this,—you that should show me sympathy in so trying a position!"

"Sympathy? Ask yourself, Flora, why I should give it."

"Are you not my sister—even nearer than my sister?"

"Oh, shame!" cried Marion. "Have you treated me as one? What sympathy have you shown me, pray, in these stolen meetings with Lydig Pearsall and the engagement you've just confessed that you have made with him?"

"I—I grant that I kept silence there. But I knew you'd be horribly angry."

"And why? Was it not because you also knew that I would have the justest and honestest reasons for anger?"

"Roland again—of course! I—I did not expect to make Lydig any such serious promise. He wrung it out of me this afternoon. He is not what Cousin Eleanor—Mrs. Garretson, I should say—so slanderously called him. He is a gentleman,—a man of education and brains and position. He did not deserve her insults, and you know it."

"True. But he deserved her censure. And you should remember that she is a woman tortured with a recent and tremendous sorrow."

"As if I had ever forgotten it!" And here Flora's blue eyes blazed with an indignation most unfamiliar to their mild depths. She laughed, too, hollowly, tauntingly. "Oh, I'm tired of this. It would kill me if I should stay. Threaten as you please, Marion." She folded her arms and beat the floor with one foot. "Go I shall. What will you do? Let me hear, so that I may tell you, 'I don't care.'"

"Perhaps you will not care when you have heard," came the composed reply of Marion. "It is only this: From the hour you leave Widewood without my consent we become strangers."

She felt, poor desperate Marion, that this was a most daring announcement to make, and as for ever keeping the resolve it contained, no idea of doing so at all had mastered her. She had merely meant to draw upon that furtive fund of compulsion which she believed lay within her reach, and if it should fail her she was unprepared what course to adopt.

But she had not, as it soon proved, miscalculated. "Strangers! Oh, no, no!" cried Flora, and in a trice all her ire had grown terrified surrender. She threw herself into Marion's arms, and protested clinging and sobbingly against this heartless alternative. Indeed, so

explosive was her offer of submission that Marion, deeply touched, wept with her, and when a servant came knocking at the door to say that dinner was served, she had to request, through closed wood-work and in tones of betraying tremor, that it should be delayed a good half-hour.

"Am I truly to stay in my room, then," at length asked Flora, with a sort of infantile meekness, "just as if I were a real, cut-and-dried invalid? Because if I must, you know, the captivity and lack of exercise will very soon make me one in dearest earnest."

"Not at all, not at all," soothed Marion, inwardly palpitant with victory. "It's easy enough, surely, not to let Roland see you, and it's almost as easy not to let him hear your step."

"And you will not ask me to talk with him again?"

Marion smiled sombrely. "He will think you are too ill."

"But in the end——"

"Ah, the end," Marion sighed. "That cannot be foreseen, Flora. If it could be, I would not object to your departure."

"Why?"

"Can you not guess? He has passed through a shattering sickness. He is now bearing the first pangs of a fearful trial. If your presence should become needful to him it would bring an almost life-saving relief. Oh, Flora," she went on, "I must tell you something now that I saved for the last. I—I meant to speak it out if everything else failed."

"What is it?"

"This morning Dr. Wingate, in speaking to Cousin Eleanor of his obstinately slender appetite and his fitful, uneven strength, accompanying periods of depression (which he hides, I fancy, from you), said that his greatest danger now was a paralytic stroke, sympathizing, so to speak, with the other ocular paralysis that has blinded him. And so . . ." Marion paused, brushing back the hair from her temples with excited haste, and drawing a deep, anxious breath, "in case he should insist—over-urgently insist—on going to you or having you brought to him, the fact of your not being absent might serve as a priceless help."

Flora turned away, with a flurried precipitation, and went to the window, standing so that the shadowy pearl which now filled the west made her shape an almost ink-black apparition.

"Oh, Marion," she moaned, "Cousin Eleanor was right. I *am* selfish. And yet you, knowing me as you do, know that I am not wantonly cruel. It is not fair to me that you should both exact strength from feebleness. I am feeble,—ordinary,—commonplace. The leopard cannot change its spots: I only wish I had half the leopard's strength. Marion, listen!"

She swung herself round in the eerie dimness and glared desolately, with her beautiful blue eyes, strained and bloodshot by recent weeping, at her grave and composed sister.

"Well, Flora?"

"If it were only you! You could meet it all so differently. . . Anyway, Marion, tell Cousin Eleanor that I hope she will forgive me. Tell her——"

"Not another word!" said Marion, with a peculiar sharp sweetness. Promptly she sped to Flora and gave her a kiss, full on the lips and lovingly prolonged. "Stay here, for a few minutes, please. I shall leave you only a short while. And don't dream of asking forgiveness, Flora. That is *her* province, not yours."

In one of the outer halls, not long afterward, Marion was saying with grieved emphasis to Mrs. Garretson,—

"She will stay. I've arranged it. If he wants her very much,—if you grow afraid of what Dr. Wingate said,—she will go to him. There; that is all I can do."

"Thanks, Marion. It is not much." The answer came in haughty and tired accents. "And I must bear him this lie!"

"No," said Marion, with most unaccustomed sternness. "You have first—pardon my reminding you of it—another duty to perform."

"Duty? To whom?"

"Flora."

The lined, pallid face grew contemptuous. "I guess what you mean."

"Cousin Eleanor, you cannot justify your late words. Flora would come to you, now, at this moment, and try to make peace with you. But I will not allow her to take such a step. You have insulted her—"

"Marion! How dare you?"

"Ah," said Marion, "I dare do more than that. I will go with her from Widewood to-morrow unless you ask her to forgive you,—unless you make her full amends for your violent outburst."

"As you please, then!" And Mrs. Garretson, her white face glimmering wraith-like in the dusk, hurried away.

Marion stood motionless for a minute. Then she went back to Flora's room.

"Let us go down-stairs and dine, dear," she said. "You know the table is always quite vacant without us nowadays, and the servants will suspect and gossip if we do not appear."

"Dine?" sighed Flora. "I haven't the ghost of an appetite."

"Nor I. But still—"

A knock sounded at the door which she had just closed. Marion went and opened it. The dusk was almost darkness, now.

"Cousin Eleanor?"

"Yes, it's I." The answer was nearly inaudible for tears. "Where—where is Flora?"

"Yonder, by the window," said Marion. She caught Mrs. Garretson to her breast, and whispered in her ear, "I knew you'd do it! And I never meant to leave you or to let her go either. It was only a—a despairing subterfuge. There!"

She pushed Mrs. Garretson forward, and hurried out, shutting the door after her.

It was a gladsome thought for Marion to dwell upon, this coming reconciliation so happily devised. But the future,—the deception to

be practised on Roland, the slow temporizing, the delayed bereavement, the final torturing intelligence,—what a world of distress, dubious yet poignant, awaited his mother and herself!

XII.

“ Ill, you say? When did she become so?”

“ Not very long since, Roland.” And Mrs. Garretson tried to laugh carelessly, and succeeded, too, though worriment and dread were dragging at her heart-strings.

“ No more, thanks,” Roland said, gently pushing away the fork that his mother had lifted to his lips.

“ Not a few more morsels of chicken, my boy? You wouldn’t touch the fish, and took only two spoonfuls of soup.”

“ I know, mother. Everything has been very nice and appetizing” (Mrs. Garretson gave, at “ appetizing,” a smile of grieved incredulity), “ and I really think you should admit, this evening, that I have done very well indeed.”

“ You did much better last evening, Roland.”

“ Well, this news, mother, about Flora,—perhaps it *has* had an effect. You say that her attack came on suddenly?”

“ Yes, rather.”

“ And in the form of a violent headache?”

“ Yes.”

“ And you haven’t sent for Dr. Wingate?”

“ Oh, no; it wasn’t necessary. She wouldn’t care to see any doctor. She simply wants rest and perfect quiet for several days.”

“ Several days! But you don’t mean that we must be separated all this time?”

Mrs. Garretson turned a despairing glance toward the half-open doorway of the library. Marion stood there, eagerly listening, her brows clouded with mistrust, ready to give what counsel might be sought of her. She made an imperative sign, which Roland’s mother, understanding, obeyed.

“ You will have me always near you, my son. Try to become used to Flora’s absence. Even if it should last a long time, recollect, pray recollect, that my devoted companionship is always at your service.”

He slowly moved his head from side to side. The bewilderment, the disappointment, the strenuous longing he thus expressed were a silent eloquence of desolation.

“ Yes, yes,” he murmured; “ I know, mother, and I thank you. But I cannot be happy without *her*. I must have her near me now and then. As long as she is willing to remain my sweetheart—” And here he stopped short, with a shadow of doubt, suspicion, austerity, clothing all his blind, helpless visage. “ Ah, perhaps she has grown tired, and you’re easing gently to me the wretched truth!”

“ It is you who are tired, Roland dear,” said his mother. “ You’ve

exerted yourself more than usual to-day. Let me call Otway, and he will help you to bed. Even if you do not sleep, you may——”

“Sleep! I can’t sleep unless I go to her, if it’s only for a minute. Take me to her, mother. How can she be so ill that a good-night kiss would do her any harm?”

He rose from his chair, with a commanding sweep of one hand, made exquisitely pitiful by the insecure way in which its outspread fingers clutched at the joined hands of his mother.

“Ah,” he laughed, with a forlorn bleakness, “I haven’t yet learned to be blind, have I?” Then, with a dash of dismal gayety, “Never mind, though, mammy. You’ll teach me, won’t you? We shall do wonders, together, shall we not?—you and she and I? Come, now, let us go and pay Flora a little visit. I promise you it shan’t be long. Come.”

He urged his mother forward. Again she turned that despairing look toward Marion. And this time it was answered differently from before.

Marion slipped toward the pair.

“Roland,” she began, not knowing just what she was about to say, but spurred by a fervid desire to aid and ease the suffering mother, and to prevent a meeting with Flora, who now lay up-stairs exhausted and nerveless. While speaking his name, she laid a hand on his shoulder. The intense similarity between Flora’s voice and her own, long spoken of and conceded, had wholly escaped her.

In an instant Roland tore his hand from his mother’s clasp.

“Flora!” he cried, and at once he gathered Marion to his breast, swept her hair with loving touches, and kissed her on cheeks, forehead, lips.

“So you came to me after all, my darling!” he impetuously hurried on. “You were not so ill as to leave me in loneliness the whole evening. Your hands *do* feel a little feverish, dear.”

“Roland, I’m not——”

But there Marion paused. In Mrs. Garretson’s gaze, in the motions of her hands, lay a whole tragedy of supplication.

“You’re not ill, darling? I’m so glad to hear you say it, but your ‘cousin Eleanor’ over yonder has told me quite a different story. . . Now, suppose you go to that big wide lounge somewhere near, and you can lie on it, and mammy will wheel my arm-chair beside it, and you can either doze or talk, just as you please.”

In hours of keenest exigency, when speech is forbidden us, we improvise, without knowing, a deaf-and-dumb alphabet that fills our needs as well as though we had studied it for months. Such intercommunication passed now between Marion and the mother of Roland.

“Do as he wishes,” cried the silence of Mrs. Garretson.

“I cannot,—I dare not,” replied Marion’s.

“It is only mercy,” sped back the other’s. “Mercy to him,—mercy to me.”

“Roland is right,” said Mrs. Garretson aloud, a moment later. “There, Roland, follow me with your chair while I wheel it. If there’s any sleeping to be done,” she added, with a full, well-feigned

laugh, "I think I can guess which of you will be the first to drop off. . . There, Roland, that's right. She's just beside you on the lounge. You're as tired, dear boy, as you can be."

Marion lay on the lounge. Her heart beat so violently that she felt almost suffocated by its pulsations. Roland's hand began softly to stroke her hair.

"Mother's right," he murmured. "I do feel fagged out. Flora."

"Well, Roland?"

"Do you know, dear, you made me miserable by leaving me as you did, this afternoon? Tell me, now,—tell me frankly,—did you feel this violent headache coming on at that time?"

"No, . . . not then."

"It came later, did it? Ah, I see. Perhaps you took a walk about the lawns."

"Yes,—a short walk."

"Alone?"

"Yes, Roland."

"Not even with your sister?"

"No,—alone."

"And Lydig Pearsall hasn't been dropping in of late at Wide-wood?"

"He was not here to-day."

"No? You're sure? Ah, well, I'm a shameful wretch to bother you about him. A shameful, jealous wretch, am I not? But, Flora, just one word: your head doesn't ache much now, does it?"

"No, Roland."

"You think you're really better, do you not?"

"Yes,—better."

"What fine news! Then just one word, as it were. Do you care for Pearsall at all?"

"No, not at all."

Marion felt a wandering series of kisses on her forehead and cheeks. . . A little later she saw Roland's head fall fatiguedly sideways against the tufted back curve of the chair. Soon his eyes closed. The dreaded excitement, balked so strangely, had ended in somnolence.

Presently Marion, with the stealthy and watchful movements of an escaping animal, drew herself toward the foot of the lounge. From this a light spring brought her into a crouching attitude on the floor. Then, slowly rising, she kept her look fixed on Roland's face. Sleep held every feature fast. She waited a few seconds, then tiptoed from the library.

In the outer hall, some distance away, paced Mrs. Garretson. As they met, the latter said, agitatedly,—

"You've left him, then? And you've undeceived him?"

"I did not undeceive him. He has fallen asleep."

"Still believing you are she?"

"Yes, more's my shame!"

"Your shame? Oh, Marion, rather say your compassion!"

"No, no. It must end, this dishonorable masquerade, after to-night."

"How can you call anything dishonorable which may restore him to health, save his life?"

Marion's first response was a frightened stare. "Oh, Cousin Eleanor, you can't possibly mean that this either could or should continue?"

"Both, my dear."

"You don't mean it," said Marion, pityingly. "Your eyes are shining with the oddest wildness, and there are spots of red in your cheeks that make me prefer the paleness they replace. You're excited, and you need a long rest. Go to your room, and I'll call Otway to take charge of Roland when he wakes."

"Excited?" said Mrs. Garretson, with a smile that flashed abnormally bright and then died on her colorless lips. "Of course I am: why not? At first I was merely bewildered by his error. Then such a thrill swept through me that I almost felt like crying out, and then there quickly came a great calm, and I seemed almost to hear the voice of God Himself sound through my spirit."

"Cousin Eleanor!"

"It was just as if the voice said, 'Here is a way. Your boy need not die of a broken heart, need not go mad, in the awful gloom of the curse laid upon him.' Excited, Marion? Why should I not be? I had just come from my reconciliation with Flora. I realized that you are right. She is more weak than wanton. In a way she is to be commiserated. Not loving Roland, she yielded to his offer. Really caring for Lydig, she now feels confronted by an impossible ordeal. It's all a martyrdom that she cannot face. But you, with your larger nature, your quick and fine sense of helpfulness, could go through it even if you did not love him——"

"No, no!" A blush leaped to Marion's temples. "I have never told you that I loved him,—never!"

"You never needed to tell me." She strained Marion to her breast, and sped on, while releasing her. "However, say that you only love *me*. That love, with your native courage, will make the task easier. Ah, I see one thought brooding in your eyes, my dearest! It is, 'How will such an effort end?'"

"Yes; how indeed *would* it end?"

"In giving him back strength to hear the truth. Trust me to impart it. I shall know the day,—almost the very hour. Let Flora go to the Rockfords at Elberon. Let her start as soon as she pleases, and remain away a fortnight,—perhaps even longer."

"Oh, Cousin Eleanor, you—you are fairly revelling in the impracticable! Think: if he should ask for Flora,—for *me*, I mean?" And Marion gave the most doleful of little broken laughs.

"I will arrange that. Oh, I'm capable of any deft and nimble falsehood."

"But the very servants,—think of them. His own body-servant, Otway! Good heavens! would you take him into your confidence?"

"Neither Otway nor any of the servants had known of his engagement to Flora. Your companionship, your attentions during Flora's absence, given their poor, blind master, who has not yet learned

how to cross a room with safety? Ah, Marion, it is you who deal in the impracticable. . . There; I will go to my room and leave Otway to care for him when he wakes, as you proposed." And here Mrs. Garretson drew the other's arm into her own. "Come, my dear, you shall put me to bed, and while you do so I shall have more to say,—unless you desert me, and fly away, and refuse to listen any longer."

"I will listen," said Marion, with a kind of warning tenderness. "But I must make you the only answer I dare to make,—the only answer you will feel I have the right to make, after this first flush of curious conviction and audacity has again left you clear-headed and composed."

"That change will never come to me," protested Mrs. Garretson, while they moved onward together. "It is a conviction, curious, if you please, and audacious, too. But it will live, it cannot help living, my child, however you may crush and stifle it under disappointment."

XIII.

Nowadays, a little beyond middle July, people driving or walking past Widewood and securing vague glimpses of its long white meandering bulk of awkwardness, would ask who lived in all that tangle of green things, and why they didn't "cultivate" it more. Perhaps some of these questioners were gratuitously informed, too, of the savage ill that had recently befallen Roland, or there may even have been those who caught fleeting views of a tall, pale, bearded man, walking in tell-tale, unbalanced, precarious way beside a girlish figure, plainly his guide.

One day he said to this companion, "Do you know, I like it so much better when we leave the paths and plunge right in among the shrubs and the low-branching trees. I love the impudent way in which they brush my face with their leaves and threaten, every now and then, to make me hatless."

"I quite agree with you," said the girl; "but then I can't forget that snake we came upon, a day or two ago. You said it was harmless; but the thought of stepping on one, harmless or not, is so hateful."

"All the snakes about here are perfectly unpoisonous. As a boy I have killed those striped fellows by the legion. . . And do you fancy I would let you take me here into the thicket if I were not perfectly sure?" He smiled down on her while he thus spoke, and it seemed, for the instant, as if he smiled no less with his eyes than his lips,—those eyes from which the blankness transiently vanished, a vague star, like the silver embryo of sight itself, swimming among the grays and purples of each. "For miles and miles about here there isn't a dangerous snake of any sort. It's a lovely country, this Westchester coast. I recall coming back from Europe once and getting enthusiastic over the shore, and wishing Widewood had a little stretch of it to call its own. Parts of the Mediterranean are not lovelier, in their

different way, than the pastoral wooded coves and bays of Rye, New Rochelle, and Greenwich. I had a small yacht that summer, and spent days cruising along the west shores of the Sound."

"Are you tired, Roland?" she presently asked.

"No. Have we been walking far?"

"Oh, two miles, perhaps. But I'm not a very good judge of distances, especially when they're made in zigzag rambles like ours."

"Are *you* tired?" he suddenly queried, with a note of self-rebuke.

"I? Not in the least. Oh, I'd tell you if I were."

"It's curious," he said, somewhat musingly, "but for a good many days past I have found myself getting so much stronger."

"That is pleasant news."

"It ought to be—to you, my dear girl; for it's you who have brought me round. The truth is, I had grown doubtful if your fidelity did not spring more from pity than— Oh, well," he broke off, cheerily, "I must not refer to my doubts; it's churlish of me, now that you've sent them so effectively about their business. The past week has been to me a slow, tender, delicious revelation. A revelation." He repeated the word as though its mere sound had an insidiously potent charm.

Marion made no answer. She had yielded, as we see; she was playing her part, and playing it with a skill that matched its difficulty. In her final crucial moments of hesitation every argument and entreaty of Roland's mother might have proved fatal, had the girl not grown confident on one point: self-sacrifice stirred her far more than the latent sentiment which Mrs. Garretson had guessed. She loved this man, but she loved better the thought of delaying till some later and more opportune time a disclosure that might plunge him in immeasurable perils. Convinced that he might slip from deadly depression into death or something worse than death, she had nerved herself for an office uniquely blent with joy and pain. There was joy in the clasp of his hand, the touch of his lips, the physical dependence which he so gratefully proffered her. But at the root of every happy thrill was pain born of shrinking modesty, of lacerated conscience, of bleeding self-respect. If she were indeed bringing him round from feebleness both mental and bodily, she was doing so at a heavy and unforgettable price. There were times when her mask weighed like iron, when she longed to tear it off with confessional cries. This had been earlier in the course of her charitable deceit, when every fortifying sense of its real heroism would leave her helpless against the taunt and leer of a naked remorse. Then had come hours of peace bestowed by the evident comfort and aid that her course of action, so strangely alleviative, was engendering. There had been periods of terror, too, when it looked as if those blinded eyes would prove no safeguard against illusion, and when she felt as if the air were pregnant with some approaching denunciation. For though her voice was Flora's, and their shapes, their features, the ripples and texture of their hair, the very mode and impetus of their movements, could be differentiated by the assistance of sight alone, still their thoughts, their characters, their views of things, were as opposite as black is to white. And the beginning of this new

relation toward Roland had therefore to be managed with a kind of vigilant, tactful, experimental art. She was treading, at first, on thin ice, or so at least she incessantly felt, and the result upon her was often arduous, exhaustive. She realized that she could not go on completely smothering herself, and that her only chance of perfect success was in a gradual if partial substitution of her own identity for that of the sister whom he believed her. It was like the slow and noiseless gliding forth from one garment into another without being observing in the process. He must either discover the full truth, or unconsciously grow accustomed to a new Flora, whose transformation had been so delicately managed that he had not paused to doubt whether or not she still remained the old.

Then, too, always with Marion abode the tormenting idea, how was all this grotesque comedy to end? He must be told, of course, sooner or later. If he asked her to marry him a thousand times more (and already he had spoken of their wedding taking place in the autumn), she would never consent except he were wholly undeceived. His mother had agreed to rend the veil when he was strong enough to endure the shock following such an act. But, ah, her own anguish of mortification! There was no species of his possible forgiveness that she could ever dissociate from irony and contempt. She was moving with him, in these dear but terrible days, toward a precipice-edge whence there was no escape. For when the disclosure was made it must sound to all their future intercourse an implacable knell. Then, having saved him, having pulled him through, let her fly to some place which would be all the more acceptable if truly it could be defined as among the uttermost parts of the earth. Practically speaking, she had decided to seek overseas her aunt, Mrs. Kirkland, whether so authorized or not. She would burst in upon the lady without premonition. Anywhere, anywhere, so that it were but far away from the consternation, the gentle humor, the delicate charity—ah, worst of all, that delicate charity!—of his unseeing look. Before he was apprised of it all she would wish to be well aloof. And neither his mother nor Flora should write her one word of how he received the tidings. His clemency, his “making allowances,” would be as unbearable as his pardon.

“A revelation,” this last repeated word from him, had shot through her fresh fears. She found herself dreading that he would pronounce Lydig Pearsall’s name; but, to her relief, he did not mention it. Instead, he fondly continued,—

“I perceive, now, that while I had suspected you of having become alienated from me, your rich sympathy, your profound suffering in my cause, was all that time at work upon the very quality of your affection, turning it more thoughtful, more introspective, giving it tinges of new, deliberative tenderness that might belong rather—well, yes, I can’t help saying so—to your sister Marion than to yourself.—Why did you start so then, Flora?”

“I—I pricked my finger with a thorn from a wild-rose bush we just passed. It’s nothing.”

Her face had whitened, but her voice was coolly well governed.

This was the first time he had spoken her own name in her hearing since the "masquerade" had begun between them.

"I did not suppose," she went on, quickly and with apparent carelessness, "that you had ever specially thought much about . . . my sister."

"About Marion? Indeed, you are wrong. Mother is never tired of singing her praises to me,—or was, until . . . my accident. But she need not have done so. I have the warmest regard and respect for Marion. I believe that if she only chooses rightly she will make some man a most lovely and cherished wife. But her sudden departure (for Elberon, was it not?) hurt me when I learned of it from mother. True, mother tells me that it was sudden, and that she left on a day when I was particularly weak and slept a great deal. I have not alluded to her absence before, Flora,—at least not when with you. Doubtless I had too many absorbing things to discuss with you. Still, when you write her, say that I grant her my full forgiveness; I'm in a mood for forgiveness, you know."

"Yes, Roland."

"Has she written you yet, by the way?"

"We've only had a few hurried lines from her, telling us of her safe return."

"That's odd, isn't it?"

"No. She's a poor correspondent——"

"Marion? I should never have suspected it. But, then, good heavens! you affirmed such shocking things about your own powers of writing!" Here Marion felt a wavering hand softly pinch her chin. "You minx—you vixen! You're the best amanuensis conceivable! And all that rubbish about your spelling! Do you know, I got mother to look at our manuscript (*our* manuscript! doesn't it sound queer?), and she assured me that it didn't contain a fault. She insists upon it that your first nervous embarrassment was the most natural thing in the world, and that when you told me you were sometimes 'dreadfully shaky' in your spelling you were merely in a state of timid hysteria."

"Co-traitor," thought Marion. "We are certainly getting on better now," she said, aloud.

"Better? I should say so." He almost shouted the words, in merry confirmation. "You've not only copied my ideas, you've given me subtle and pungent ones of my own. This novel must be a collaboration,—openly announced so to the public."

"Oh, no, no!"

"Well, then, you modest puss, I'll dedicate it to my wife, with some decidedly betraying statements. For you *will* be my wife by that time—Ho, ho! you're actually shivering—don't deny it. Strange weather, this, for late July. That rattling thunderstorm last night has cleared the air with a vengeance. Besides, you girls will wear such thin things in all sorts of weather. I'd shiver, too, I dare say, if I had on that thin puffy affair round my shoulders. We'll get home, and if you're not too tired we'll have a little tug together at the manuscript. I somehow feel in the humor, or shall if you'll only stand still right here—it's a sheltered place, I know it is, from the murmur of

boughs all about us—and give me one long, sweet, celestial sort of kiss."

"Roland! I . . ."

But he would not be refused. . . When they reached home, however, she noticed signs of fatigue in him which the elixir of somewhat passionate love-making had not served to dispel.

XIV.

Afterward, when she sat beside him in the library, she grew doubtful if the change were merely fatigue. Her society constantly stimulated him, and often she suspected that he lived upon it from one meeting to another, almost like a wine-bibber on his draughts. To-day Marion had no sooner completed preparations at the library table than she turned to perceive that his chin rested on one hand and that the arch of his lips had sagged into a line of sudden weariness.

"And what, after all," he exclaimed, "is the use of going on? I would let the whole story be thrown into the fire if it were not for the fragrance of yourself that has somehow begun to cling round it. Oh, Flora, Flora, do you ever think of my fate in all its ghastly sadness?"

"You are not the only one, Roland."

"Oh, I concede it," he said, with a strangled laugh. "What horrible thing is there on earth of which we cannot say, 'It has happened before'? But my case is still most sternly unusual. Flora, I had everything,—even your love. And now—" His blind eyes flashed upward, his pale, bearded face grew sublime in the sharpness and plenitude of his suffering, and he flung both clenched hands down upon the arms of his easy-chair. "God knows I wouldn't live one hour longer if it were not for you. Don't tell mother I said so, Flora, but you're the only bond between me and life."

Marion did not repeat that last sentence to Mrs. Garretson, but she spoke of the agonized interval through which Roland had passed, and described it with shuddering eloquence.

"These outbursts will gradually grow less frequent," said Mrs. Garretson.

"Perhaps," half assented Marion. "But the anguish that causes them, will not this remain obdurate? The wound may heal outwardly and yet bleed within."

"No, no," said Mrs. Garretson, shaking her head with the air of one troubled by some winged insect. She had almost got a look of content, lately, and the uneasy wildness of her eyes—a trait so foreign to her countenance in its fragility, high breeding, and repose—had markedly fled.

"My dear girl," she continued, "you have done wonders with him, as it is."

"I, forsooth!"

"You, as proxy, deputy,—what you will." Mrs. Garretson creased her brows, and let her under lip slide ruminatively below her upper

teeth. "I've been thinking that as it's all going on so splendidly, it should last."

"It should last, Cousin Eleanor? I—I'm not sure that I understand you."

Roland's mother made some swift airy hieroglyphs with both up-springing hands. "Should last, my dear! You *do* love him, you know. I'll never have it that you don't, and I'll never have it that you're not aware I'm sure of your love. You admit that the improvement has thus far been most striking. In my meditations I seem to see and feel that we have taken the one wise, merciful, commendable course. And I seem also to see and feel that we should persevere in it."

"Persevere? Indefinitely? Never!"

"Stop a moment, Marion. Say you married him in the autumn, and that you and he and I went abroad immediately afterward. We could live there on and on, till all three of us, for that matter, were dead. There need be no real deceit practised with the clergyman who made you one, for I have not forgotten that your dead mother named her twins each after two loved friends; you are both 'Flora Marion,' only one has been called Flora all her days, and one Marion. Well, what could be a more perfect arrangement? He would never know; over there, how could there possibly be the faintest chance of his finding out? And Flora would live here for the most of her time, and, being in the secret, after she had married her beloved Lydig Pearsall, she would certainly consent to meet you *en cachette* in Europe, if she ever met you there at all. I don't see, my dear, why you and he should not be immensely happy for all the rest of your wedded lives."

"But *I* see," said Marion, icily.

"There, there! I knew you would quarrel with your destiny. But I have no fear of you," Mrs. Garretson went on. "Every new day will show you fresh proofs of your good work."

"Cousin Eleanor! I am living a lie, as it is."

"A righteous lie."

"Can any lie be righteous? You yourself told me that this need be of only short duration. You yourself said that when Roland had fully regained his strength he would be able to bear the entire truth. I—I hate to speak the words, but have you not led me into a trap from which you believe I either cannot or will not break free?"

Tears, hot with resentment, filled her eyes, and she hurried away to her own room at a precipitate pace. Thither Mrs. Garretson followed her, and, while she gave the girl a bounty of unreturned embraces, poured into her ears a monologue that was nothing more nor less than the vigor and mass of her own mighty maternalism changed into a verbal torrent. She was bent, she declared, upon saving for her poor boy all the happiness this explosive bereavement had left him. There were fragments, and she wanted to gather these together and place them, as it were, upon a sacred shrine. She could not do the work alone; her hands—even these eager mother's hands of hers—were not strong or deft enough. Only one other could help her, and that other it seemed as if Providence, in a repentant mood, had supplied. There had been no trap set,—none whatever; all this later

proposal was the prompting of after-thought,—passionate, despairful, illogical, unreasoning after-thought, but still informed with a purpose, a devoutly loving purpose, which Marion, of all others, ought to see and share.

“And yet,” said Roland’s mother, changing the voluble suppleness of her tones, “if you will once assure me, Marion, on your honor, your sacred honor, that to become his wife and live with him always, as friend, consoler, counsellor, guardian, protectress, will not prove to you a sweeter and finer fate than to lose him forever,—if you will swear to me that this is true and that I have erred in thinking otherwise,—then I, for my part, promise that I will never again revert to this subject, and that when the time comes for dissipating all secrecy I will not shrink.”

“You have no right to seek from me any such oath,” Marion replied. She was angry, and her tightened lips, her quick-heaving breast, showed it. “I thought, once, that your love for him was a kind of sanctity. Your inadmissible attack on Flora weakened that faith, though I still pitied you from my soul. Now your grief clothes itself in a new arrogance. How should you presume to make conditions with me like this? Be careful, or I will leave Widewood, and give you that alone for an answer to the sacrilegious marriage you propose.”

“Arrogance? Sacrilegious? Where did you learn such high-sounding words?”

“I was educated,” retorted Marion, in tones tranquil yet scathing, “at an academy where dictionaries supplied exact definitions for the pupils who cared to seek them.” And then a look of heart-broken misery on Mrs. Garretson’s face sent to the winds her wrath, which was rare with her as it was short-lived. She looked into her friend’s penitent and beseeching eyes, and the next moment let that friend’s arms enfold her.

“Marion, Marion, forgive me! There are times when I scarcely know what I am saying. Tell me that you forgive me! I will not be wild and foolish again. . . . You knew me before this horror came upon me. You can judge how it has clutched me by the throat, shaken half the dignity, pride, self-respect, from my spirit. I sometimes ask myself if I am now any longer a lady,—I who held my head so high as one, and had such a quiverful of shafts for the *bêtises*, the vulgarities, of others. Affliction—there’s the bald, frigid fact—has stripped me of all the graces and amenities. Only motherhood remains, not tender and heavenly as it once was, but rude, barbaric, an animalism, not a humanity.”

This ungoverned outcry of a suffering life chased from Marion her last indignant qualm. But, though she had seemed so sturdy in her negation and repulse, the interview broke cords of determination that a short while ago had seemed infrangible. From that day, it might be said, Marion’s resistance began to lose in momentum. She did not allow that the stream was too strong for her, but she admitted as never before the tiring and thwarting potency of its current. Mrs. Garretson had convinced her with inexorable clearness that a future of golden achievement lay within her reach. This going away into a distant

country and being with him always,—how it began to haunt her, to hang over her life the quiverings of its desire, as a humming-bird's are hung over a flower! The joy of being depended upon is not usually, as we all well know, the woman's joy. But for her it grew a joy to which only one other might be compared,—that of having his vision restored to him by some unthinkable miracle and yet having the love she now vicariously received from him stay her unceasing tribute. The peril to her conscience, nowadays, lay in its own feverish attempt to justify itself. Emotion, passion, imagination, kept coming into the field against it with high-held banners. Years of duplicity lived out toward a fellow-creature might be abstractly sinful; but how as to the kind of duplicity that bathed its recipient in blessing? Truth for the simple sake of truth might, in this instance, merit no better name than that of buckram prudery. Falsehood for the sake of conferring long and deep happiness on another,—how conceivably could it be rated as wrong-doing? Hope is an orchid, feeding on air and blossoming by airy aids alone. In the tints it displayed to Marion's often unwilling gaze she saw the fireside crimson of a peaceful future home, the golds and greens of a sunlit country lawn. He would grow elderly, grow old, and perhaps die, at the last, in her devoted arms. Already he had won fame; at least the foundations of a beautiful and stately temple had been laid; here a pillar was reared, there a plinth planted; the arches and architraves, the cornices and rileivos, were yet to come. Together they might complete the fair edifice,—or, no, not really together, since he would create, she obey, suggest, stimulate, sympathize.

In a few more days a profuse letter arrived from Flora, describing her new quarters at Elberon as delightful, and the hospitality of the Rockfords as ideal. "I want to be quite frank with you," one passage of the letter ran, "and tell you that Lydig Pearsall has taken his abode near us, at one of the Long Branch hotels, and that we see him very often. I have thought best to write Aunt Isabella in Europe of our engagement. I don't suppose she will make any opposition. She knows perfectly well who the Pearsalls are, and all that. Then, by this time, I dare say the news of poor Roland's blindness has reached her. She will perceive that our coming out at Newport this summer is impossible, and, as she was lazy and selfish enough to shift the whole matter upon Cousin Eleanor, she will no doubt regard my betrothal as a sort of providential occurrence, and be warmly glad of it." Toward the close of her communication Flora wrote, "The Rockfords have been so cordial in their persuasions for me to remain with them till the middle of August that unless you positively disapprove such a plan I shall not return earlier to Widewood. Of course you saw, Marion, how entirely useless I had become—how even worse than useless—as regarded poor Roland. You can't imagine, my dear sister, what deep relief it gave me to slip off quietly in that way without the distress of a farewell scene. I was so utterly unstrung that I am sure I should have made one if he hadn't. For seven or eight days after my arrival here I was so ill that often I had to lie down hours at a time. Rachel was lovely, and her mother the perfection of goodness. I told them that I had had nervous exhaustion at Widewood, but that I never dreamed

of inflicting upon them so burdensome an invalid. They wouldn't hear of my even hinting that it wasn't a pleasure to nurse me, and their untiring devotion (added, of course, to Lydig's visits) has almost completely cured me. But why have you written me such mere notes, Marion,—maddeningly unsatisfactory, with only the barest mention of Roland? I thought you had realized before I left that I was not cruel or heartless, but rather a girl bewildered and terrified by the outlook threatening her. I constantly keep wondering how he bore my absence. Cousin Eleanor thought it best I should not write him,—at least not unless she sent me instructions to that effect. And indeed, if I did write, what consoling or self-excusing thing could I put on paper? At the same time, I long very deeply, Marion, to learn how he is,—whether you have told him everything, whether his health has suffered, whether he has faced the truth like that brave and noble fellow I know him to be, far, far my superior, and worthy of a woman tenfold better and stronger than I. Do send me full information as soon as you can. I shudder to think that your 'no news' may be bad news. . . It is really quite gay here, and there are some very attractive and rather fashionable people in many of the beautiful rainbow-colored cottages. The other evening we had quite a brilliant ball at the hotel, and Rachel assured me I was the reigning belle; though of course that was only complimentary nonsense. Naturally, I have told Rachel and her mother about my engagement, though I've sworn them both to profound secrecy; and as for Lydig, he is discretion itself."

"And what answer shall you make her?" said Mrs. Garretson, with a little covert twitching of the lips,—perhaps the result of a politely baffled sneer,—when Flora's sister had finished reading aloud her letter.

"I don't know," said Marion, folding the open paper into new creases till it began to wear a chequered look. "Most probably you will endorse the idea of her remaining till the fifteenth of August?"

"Yes,—decidedly, yes."

"And you would dissent to my writing her on . . . a certain other subject?"

"Roland and yourself? Oh, by all means! It would be sheer madness to intrust her with such facts there at the Rockfords'. We shall have time enough when she returns. Flora must be dealt with very diplomatically."

"True," answered Marion, replacing the letter in its envelope with swift yet unsteady motions. "It would be pleasant to think that nothing more difficult than mere diplomacy would be needed . . . elsewhere."

For some reason Mrs. Garretson immediately changed the current of talk. "I told you, I think, that Mrs. Pearsall, Lydig's mother, drove over to see me this morning. You and Roland had just gone for one of your walks. She wanted to see him, and also asked for you. I did not speak of your being together; I simply said that you were out, and that he, as yet, shrank from all visitors. Poor, dear old friend, she was full of confidences. But, do you know, she made it all intolerable to me by saying that her own treasured son was an added

reason for her deep sympathy. To compare that fellow with my Roland!—it seemed insulting, even from Lydig's own mother. Don't look at me with those reprimanding eyes, Marion. I know it was wicked, inhuman, and all that. But I couldn't restrain the feeling. Sorrow hardens, warps, sours a certain kind of mortal. I belong, I suppose, to that kind. Still, I struggle more than you guess. You see, it's been such a lightning-flash of agony. I often wish that the doomful thing had dawned on me slowly, that I could have got to acquaint myself with it by degrees instead of having it dart into my life like the dirk of an assassin. . . . By the way, how do you manage with Roland's novel? I suspect that together you are making it thus far his masterpiece."

"I, Cousin Eleanor, his secretary?"

"Be as modest, my dear, as you please; but I have stolen a few glances at those later sheets in the desk-drawer of the library." All the subtle, indescribable havoc of suffering seemed to fade from the speaker's face in a transient suffusion of gladness and pride and gratulation. "Ah, you don't know how keen I am! Always I have been Roland's least lenient of critics. There was no contesting his beauty and rarity of style. Polish, color, acumen, the delight of a supple and yet sculpturesque art, all were vivid to me in his work. Yet it wanted the one thing piercingly human, and you have given it him,—you, a girl scarcely out of your school-books! It's amazing how you can collaborate with him as you do."

"Collaborate! I!"

"It is not definable by that word, my dear. It is an influence, elusive as the vaguest odor. It is not a literary influence, either. Ah, my *flair* cannot be deceived. I know his work too well without you; now I perceive what it is *with* you. Perhaps it is only his *being* with you,—his saying it for your pen to put it down. Yet here and there I detect some new bend in some willowy phrase, some word which is the exquisitely apt one,—the *mot juste*, but still not a word he would have used there and then. It is not like a restraint; he never needed that; he needed just what you give him, or what his love for you gives him. Having ten times your worldly experience, having thrice your knowledge of books, I could not have sat by his side and helped him with your splendid, delicate discretion. The story will be, thus far, the best of his life,—if it is ever completed."

"Ever completed!" Marion exclaimed, with cheeks kindled by this unforeseen assault of praise, little merited as she believed it. "Oh, of course the story will be finished!" Then, carried away by excitement, she went on, "Everything is now so clear to us,—to him, I mean, for of course he has talked over with me the ending and the intermediate chapters."

Mrs. Garretson gave a sudden resonant sigh. "Talked them over, yes! But such a book would require six months more of labor. The labor of love, my dear, in more senses than one. What may have happened in six months' time? Unless all goes well with him, poor boy, I can fancy him groping for those papers and tearing them into shreds."

"Ah, not that!" cried Marion. Then, with the rose dying out of her face, she sat quite still, and through mind and heart stole the sensation of one who has indeed been artfully caught in a trap.

XV.

Quite suddenly, one day, Roland surprised Marion by saying,—
"I had always thought *you* were the Rockfords' friend, Flora. And yet your sister's visit at Elberon is to be prolonged till the middle of August."

"Oh, they've always been fond of my sister," Marion answered, feeling that her falsehood was none the less false because in a manner true.

"I'd like to see some of Marion's letters," Roland went on. "Does she never send any message to me?"

"Why, yes," came the response (and a sinking heart accompanied it): "she always asks . . . to be . . . remembered."

"Indeed!" laughed Roland, with blithe sarcasm. "Upon my word, you make a very faithful confidante of her messages! Marion and I were always good friends; I have the most cordial affection for her. Why do you never read me any of her letters?"

"Only because of stupid absent-mindedness, Roland, I suppose."

"Forgive me, dearest." His hand reached out for hers. Then, while making of it a little arch against his lips, he went on: "One more question.—Why, your hand's quite cold, Flora, and the day so warm! If you were not well—if I sometimes wearied you too much over the work in which you so invaluabley aid me—you would tell me with perfect frankness, would you not?"

"Yes, yes, Roland. But I have been quite well, and you never weary me,—never in the least."

"Ah, that's pleasant news. Now for my other question. I've never mentioned Lydig Pearsall's name in quite an age, have I?"

"No."

"Well, then, you'll acquit me of the charge of being a jealous lover if I ask you whether you have seen him at all of late."

"He is away, Roland. I—I think he went at about the same time that she left Widewood."

"Oh, indeed? Do you know where he went?"

"To Long Branch,—Monmouth Beach,—or some place like that."

"Why, they are both near Elberon. Strange. Marion never cared for him, nor did he for her. I'm right, am I not?"

"Beyond question, yes." She was gnawing her lips till they almost bled. "Those are places where they have horse-racing, you know, and hence, I imagine, their attraction."

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Roland. "He had always that craze, had he not? . . . Shall we begin our new chapter, now that we are in Rome for a while, with a stroll taken by Doris and Longstaffe through the Pincio gardens? We will have them walk among the dusky ilexes

and the glimmering marble busts, and pause, just at nightfall, on the highest terrace above the Piazza del Popolo to watch the dome of St. Peter's bulge up against an autumn sky of pomegranate and silver. How will that do for a kind of portico or vestibule of the noteworthy edifice we shall now try to build?—an *entrée en matière*, as the French would phrase it?"

"It ought to be charming," she said, battling with the discomposure he did not suspect. "But then, you know, I have never been in Rome."

"I will take you there," he said, smiling.

Later, closeted with Mrs. Garretson, Marion told of the questions concerning Flora's letters and the desire to hear their contents. "Ah, Cousin Eleanor," she declared, with sombre lamentation, "here is the first tangle in this dangerous web we are weaving."

"Not a serious one," came the placid reply. "Trust me to deal with it."

"But how? If you refuse to read the letters—"

"I shan't refuse to read *certain* letters."

"Cousin Eleanor! You mean spurious ones?"

"M-m—hardly."

"But not those that she really wrote?"

With her graceful head a little sideways, Mrs. Garretson made the fingers of one hand touch a near window-sill as though it were playing on the imaginary keys of a piano.

"A mosaic, my dear, of those that she really wrote. As the musicians would say, an 'arrangement' of them."

"Oh, it ought not to be!" Marion cried. "These small deceits are so trivial, so paltry, so unworthy of a woman like yourself."

Mrs. Garretson ceased her slow and noiseless tattoo. She gave Marion the full force and candor of her look.

"For me no deceit is too trivial," she said, "and none too presumptuous, provided it helps his happiness."

What occurred between Roland and his mother with respect to Flora's letters, Marion never knew. But she had ample material for surmise, and drew her own conclusions.

An interval of torrid heat soon set in. July died like a moribund tigress. The days were filled with tropic glare, the nights were breathless arches of gloom, with faint gold stars burning still as tips of candle-flames in depths of vaults. Roland bore the enervation of the weather in a way that astonished both his chief watchers. Marion, indeed, became ill and unable to leave her room for three or four days. All this while he spent long intervals beside her. His excessive solicitude, his unwavering tenderness, his moments of a new and wistful rebellion against the blindness that kept him from little lover-like ministrations to her comfort, all served as a fresh welding and tightening of the links in that chain, forged by unrelenting circumstance, which already had bound her to him despite every mental and spiritual struggle.

"Roland is wonderfully better," said Mrs. Garretson, after Marion had regained her lost strength. "I feared his intense anxiety on your

account might work him harm. But no; his recuperation had already become too permanent for that."

Marion said nothing, and presently Roland's mother continued: "Even before your illness I had taken upon myself, as you know, the responsibility of being Flora's sole correspondent. Of course I realized that a little preparation would be necessary for the great surprise which will await her home-coming. That is now not far off. I have dwelt a good deal upon the strong friendship which has developed between Roland and yourself. I have mentioned the great efficiency you have shown as his secretary. I have even permitted my pen a little mild rhapsody on the subject of his deep fondness for your society. Naturally, you will perceive my motive in this course."

"Yes." As Marion spoke, she had an abrupt desire to wring her hands. But instead she only stared down at them miserably, where they lay in two white, helpless curls on her lap.

"There can have been but one motive, Cousin Eleanor. You wanted to prepare her for the fact of my—my false personation."

"That is true. I don't doubt, my dear, that she is now longing to hear you have supplanted her in Roland's heart. You must grant that she has not a profound nature. Shallow or deep, we are apt to measure people by the standards of our own personalities. It will not seem to her so hard a matter for him to change. And when she hears how and why he has changed—or, rather, that he has not self-believingly changed at all—the shock of her actual future discovery will have vanity for its leaven."

"You somehow always keep a sneer for Flora. You've never pardoned her turning from him to Lydig Pearsall."

"Oh, I'll pardon her, I'll almost be prepared to love her, if all goes right."

Marion gave a guilty start. "If all goes right? You mean, if she, on her part, forgives me."

"No, . . . I did not mean that. She has no reason, of course, not to forgive you."

"In a little while she will be back here at Widewood."

"Yes."

"And you will tell her, then?"

"I will tell her."

"And—" Marion stopped dead short, as if choking down a sob.

"Well, my dear?"

"Who—who will tell *him* about it all? You?"

Mrs. Garretson, with averted face, looked out on the massed leafage of the lawn. "Oh, that is another affair. *Quite* another affair." She slowly turned and fixed on Marion a still, dull, enigmatic look. "If you wish, you can tell him. But I do not think you will wish. Will you?"

"No," said Marion, springing to her feet. "It would be torture—anguish; and you very well know that it would."

"I am perfectly aware that it would," said the other, with what her listener thought the most pitiless challenge in her smooth, hard tones.

"How this woman has watched me!" Marion was meanwhile telling herself. "How she has read me, studied me, kept her finger on my pulse, kept an ear close to each heart-beat in my breast!"

With a sort of business-like collectedness, her companion went on: "I shall arrange with the servants about keeping silence before Roland as to Flora's return. Fortunately, he meets them but seldom. Regarding trusty old Otway we need have no fears; he always deports himself like a model of taciturnity and discretion whenever I so request of him. Flora will simply come into the house as if she had been out of it for a morning stroll. I will meet her at the station myself, having learned the exact hour of her arrival."

And this, about a fortnight later, Mrs. Garretson did. Flora looked as pretty as ever while seated in the carriage at her hostess's side. "One doesn't expect anything to alter a piece of Dresden china," reflected the latter, "unless a crack or an out-and-out breakage. Age will eventually do one or the other for all this rather inane comeliness."

Flora rattled on quite genially during the homeward drive. She had never been one to bear grudges, and she took it for granted that Cousin Eleanor and herself were now the firmest of friends. She had qualities of sweetness which those of thrice her strength and character far too often lack, and for which they give their weaker fellows far too little credit. The power of self-effacement, of forgetting slights, insults, injuries, will often coexist with a mental mediocrity which those who despise it and who pride themselves on superior intellectual gifts would do well to bear in mind. Eleanor Garretson, for all her largeness of mind and nature, might have learned an ethical lesson from the smiling and babbling girl at her elbow. That "sensitiveness" whose *alias* is so frequently self-esteem would have made impossible, in her own case, the condonement of hot and acrid personalities which Flora had found it easy to extend.

"It's charming, Cousin Eleanor, to see all this richness of grass and trees after being so long in flat, sandy Elberon. I often used to think how ugly and commonplace it would all be there if the architects had not done so much in the way of fanciful and brilliant cottages. You told me of the terrible heat here. I don't believe you suffered more than we did. I used to lie awake o' nights near a wide-open window that gave right on the ocean, and feel angry at it for only sending me the sound of its waves without a breath of its coolness. And so the dreadful weather made poor Marion ill. That was sad to hear, but I liked what you wrote about . . . a . . . Roland's devoted behavior. Do tell me, have they become such excellent friends?"

"They're a good deal together."

"They ought to be so congenial! I've always said that Marion has a very remarkable mind. Not that I'd compare it to his for an instant. But it's occurred to me many times that if he would let her, and she were not too distrustful of herself, she might make him a wonderfully clever assistant with his writings."

"She has helped him considerably, I hear."

"Oh, how delightful!" Flora clapped her gloved hands together, and the brisk sound made for Mrs. Garretson a sort of insolent in-

vasion of the country stillness. She at once hastened to say, though with no marks of speed,—

“I shall ask a little favor of you, Flora. Go with me immediately to your own room (it's waiting you, just as before) when we arrive at Widewood, will you not?”

“Certainly,” said Flora, her face falling with a childlike perplexity. “Is there anything wrong, though? Is Marion ill again? Or——?”

“I've no bad news for you,” broke in Mrs. Garretson, with dry serenity. “That is, I am very far from so considering it, and I can hardly doubt that you, after a little reflection, will take an opposite view.”

“How you pique my curiosity!” smiled Flora. “Of course I can't even suspect, from your tone and words, that Roland is not still as well as when you last wrote me.”

“Roland is better than at one time I ever dreamed he would be. No; it is not that. It is nothing at all like that. Pray curb your curiosity, will you not, till we are all three up-stairs together?—you, Marion, and I. . . Ah, here is the gate of old Widewood now.” Mrs. Garretson leaned forward and touched with the tip of her parasol the back of her coachman.

“Robert,” she said, “you remember?”

Almost immediately the carriage stopped. “We are going to get out here, Flora, if you don't object. We are going to walk up the main drive to the house. Then we will enter quietly, if you've still no objection,—not stealthily, but quietly. You will find the grounds very pretty, in their leafy wildness, after the recent rains which have followed the heat.”

Flora, in silence, quitted the carriage. Her pink-and-white face had grown unwontedly grave. The roadside, plumed here and there with the first bright bravery of its August golden-rods, had grown shadowed as by omen and portent. Still silent, she passed through the open gateway among the dense-clustered foliage, whose breezy rustle now resolved itself into curious, mystic, and tantalizing whispers.

XVI.

“You will find Marion in your own room, waiting you there,” said Mrs. Garretson to Flora while they ascended the piazza and passed indoors. “I will join you both presently.” She soon left Flora at the foot of a certain side staircase which led directly to her own and her sister's quarters. While traversing a goodly length of hallway they had not met a soul. The house seemed appallingly lonely to Flora.

“Where are all the servants?” she said, pausing, just before Mrs. Garretson left her.

“At their various duties. You know they usually are, just now.”

“But I thought somebody would be here to—to welcome me,” Flora said, with her lips trembling like the child's they were. “I—I supposed that Marion and he would be down-stairs; you wrote that

they were so often together. Everything you've lately written has made me almost confident that he has forgiven me."

"Forgiven you?"

Her relative had expected this form of speech some time ago. In Flora's letters there had been a constant half-hinted question, and not long since she had written, "You never speak of Roland's feelings toward me. I should so like to know whether he has pardoned me or not, and on what terms I am to meet him when I come back."

A memory of this never-answered question now swept through Flora. She had been on the verge of verbally making it when Mrs. Garretson had put her mysterious request just before they dismounted from the carriage.

"Forgiven me,—yes," she now quavered. "Hasn't he? And were you afraid he would come down-stairs—or have some one lead him down—to upbraid me, to reproach me, hearing the carriage-wheels on the drive outside? Oh, yes," the girl went on, in distressful tremolo, "I'm sure I have guessed rightly. I should never have come back till I had learned the facts, the real facts, as to his feelings."

With repressed impatience Mrs. Garretson gently pushed her nearer the lowest step of the stairs. "Remember your promise that you would go at once to Marion. As for the facts of which you speak, I've only this to tell you: Roland does not know you have come back."

"Does not know!"

"Not so loudly, please. You shall have a full explanation within the next half-hour. There, now; I give you my word that everything shall soon be made clear. Will you go up and meet Marion, as I asked of you, and as you agreed to do?"

While a puzzled frown overhung the solemn bewilderment of her round, querying blue eyes, Flora turned and began a slow, spiritless ascent.

On the threshold of her room stood Marion. The sisters looked into one another's faces, clasped one another's hands, then kissed one another on both cheeks.

Like all people who feel that there is a great deal which might be said, each to each, they at first said very little. It seemed to Flora as if she had hardly got off her hat and some light outward summer raiment when Mrs. Garretson entered.

The latter looked meaningfully at Marion. "Has she insisted on your telling her?"

"I was not to tell," said Marion, faintly. "That office was to be yours."

"Right. I accepted it; I accept it still."

Flora gave a little dreary cry. "Oh, what has happened? Roland does not know I've returned? Well, then, why have you kept the news from him? What does it all mean? If he is hard and bitter against me, why did you not warn me of this? I need not have come back here at all. The Rockfords would have let me stay at Elberon until Aunt Isabella got home from abroad. Then I could have taken refuge with her, until—"

Pell-mell as Flora's words were, she came to a sudden pause in them.

"Until your marriage?" said Mrs. Garretson.

"Well, yes."

"No one opposes it, Flora."

"Not . . even . . Roland?"

"Listen, Flora. Come and sit beside me on this lounge, please. I have a great deal to tell you. There, like that, my dear. I must watch your face,—the surprise of it, the dismay, perhaps (who knows?), the indignant dissent."

Flora, with head thrown a little backward, with every line of her form expressing intensest eagerness, a lily of grace and a rose of color magically mingled in that freshest and sweetest human flower we call maidenhood, sat now at the side of Mrs. Garretson.

"Whatever it is," she murmured, "do let me hear it."

Marion stole from the room into her own, closing the door behind her. Mrs. Garretson saw the departure, but made no attempt to check it. Afterward, almost at once, she began to speak.

The entire history, commencing at Roland's unforeseen mistake and ending in the present lover-like relations, with such a might in their intimacy, between Marion and her son, was slowly, clearly, unsparingly told. Before she had finished, Flora's face had gone through a dozen changes.

"And so, Cousin Eleanor, he . . he has never known?"

Mrs. Garretson drooped her head, for a few seconds, over a tiny flask which she clutched in both hands. While she slipped the little crystal thing away, Flora caught her arm.

"You're not well?"

"Well? I'm exhausted,—unnerved; that's all." She gave a tired yet energetic swerve of her body backward, laying the arm that Flora had grasped along the rear wood-work of the lounge. She was smiling. It was a smile that showed her white, well-preserved teeth, with small touches of gold fillings here and there. It was not a kind or cordial smile; in its amplitude gleamed only the phantom of geniality, like that one notes in an open-mouthed mask.

"And so," repeated Flora, "he has never known." Her eyes were roving everywhere about the room; they swept the ceiling, the wallpaper, the various articles of furniture, the figures in the carpet. At last, in their juvenile, perturbed sweetness, they devoured her companion's face.

"And he thinks Marion is *I*! How strange! how unspeakably strange! And you want it to go on like that?"

A great deal of fire had blent with Mrs. Garretson's recent speech. Only the faded embers of it stayed in her words, now, as she answered, with head slightly drooped,—

"Your aunt Isabella lately wrote me a most shocked and sympathetic letter. She realizes only too clearly the impossibility of my bringing you and Marion out at Newport this summer. She expects to return by the first week in September. Your presence here at Widewood is not known to Roland. You could go back and stay

with your cordial friends the Rockfords, without his knowing that you have arrived. Afterward, under Mrs. Kirkland's roof in New York, you could marry Lydig Pearsall when you chose. During the early autumn Roland's marriage would occur, very privately, and I would at once go abroad—to remain indefinitely—with your sister and him."

Here Flora rose half strugglingly from the lounge.

"It's a thunderbolt, Cousin Eleanor! What does Marion say?" She hurried to the door by which her sister had disappeared. She caught its knob and flung it open. "Marion!" she called.

As she and Marion met, Mrs. Garretson swept between them. She lifted a warning finger at Flora.

"If you resent, condemn, disapprove all this, blame only me, not her. It is all my work, my plan, my design."

Across the speaker's shoulder Flora was staring agitatedly at her sister.

"Marion," she appealed, "you know all I've been hearing?"

Marion, deathly pale, nodded in affirmative.

"And you'll consent to it, Marion? You'll—you'll marry him, like this?"

"No," rang the retort. As she made it, Marion seized Flora's hand. "Come with me! Come with me to Roland. He must learn all now, without further delay."

Flora recoiled. "Marion!" said Mrs. Garretson, "have you lost your senses, that you counsel such a course?"

"It seems to me that I've regained them,—nothing else. You see how the whole thing affects Flora. Its falsity horrifies her."

"Still," objected Flora, with dazed plaintiveness, "it has gone too far. Telling him the truth now would be like . . . like a crime."

"And what," said Marion, with self-accusing grimness, "would *not* telling him the truth be like?"

"A mercy," insisted Mrs. Garretson. She addressed Flora with fiery tragedy in her out-strained face. "A mercy to your sister, as well. This is the merest hysteria in Marion now. If she dragged you into my son's presence, or if she went there alone, and compelled him, as she puts it, to 'learn all,' she would be desolating her own future no less than his. Oh, believe me, Flora, the more this whole project accustoms itself to your mind, the more you survey it from both the sides of expediency and benevolence, the more you will see that it is one in which the end peculiarly yet amply justifies the means. As Marion herself, in calmer moments, would tell you, it is simply fighting fate. She loves Roland with all her heart. She will save him from the keener agonies of his condition. The secret need never transpire. You and Marion must talk together; I must talk with you again and still again. In the end I am certain that on my part it will be no conquest, but rather a concession, an acknowledgment, on yours. What now seems like dishonesty to him will strike you in a fresh light,—that of loving-kindness, benignity, charity."

The new-comer had not been a day at Widewood before she began to side with Mrs. Garretson and applaud her sister. Of course it was a plot, a fraud, a deliberate conspiracy, but to meditate on its motive

was to grow certain that this lay rooted in good rather than evil. The whole thought of it still frightened Flora, its boldness had so alarming, so unprecedented an aim and range. Had anything like it ever been dreamed of before? And yet one could see its purpose in such clear perspective; one had only to brood a little on the entire scheme in order to grant that its clean-cut simplicity was the very synonyme and prophecy of its success. After her easy and careless way of looking at all things, Flora soon found herself regarding the whole affair in the light of a sober diversion, if not positive amusement. The fact of Marion—staid and proper and unfurtatious—being actually in love had for her its droll point of view. Then the hide-and-seek game involved an excitement at times really more pleasurable than otherwise. Once or twice she came in sight of Roland and glided away from him with the coy smile of a child at blindman's-buff. Mrs. Garretson's gratitude at her pliable posture was tinged with a new contempt for her flippancy. But this feeling was hidden behind the most smiling graciousness. To Marion she said, one day,—

“Thank heaven, all is now settled. She has written to the Rockfords, and they will no doubt soon give her their consent that she shall go again to them and stay until your aunt Isabella comes home. The servants have begun to suspect; but no matter for that. Clever and faithful old Otway has thrown dust in their eyes with great adroitness. After all, none of them is by any means certain that she has not met Roland since her arrival, and his retirement (never appearing in the dining-room, and all that) makes their real certainty impossible. They will all be discharged shortly. Your wedding will take place in town, and in the most private possible way. Why not name for it some early day in September? A French steamer sails then: we can take her. Meanwhile, against every chance of Roland's discovery I will stand guard, the wariest and most vigilant of sentinels. But my task will not be in the least difficult. A few hours, one may say, at some quiet hotel, with none of my old friends even aware that I am in New York. During this time I hold certain arrangements and discussions with the managers of our money-affairs. The investments are all secure; there has never been any trouble during our long residences abroad. This residence is to be, most probably, life-long on both my own part and his. As for the management of your income, Marion, that must be left to your aunt Isabella, who will forward you in the future all funds due you, as chief trustee of your own and Flora's property. Flora has promised to make all plain to her when she returns. I myself will write her from Europe. She will not dream of behaving unpleasantly. She is an indolent, egotistic woman, and also one who detests having the least publicity connected with her family name. Besides, she always declared herself an ardent admirer of Roland. She has written me, as you know, of the keen grief his malady caused her. Trust me, when I present to her the whole peculiar proceeding she will not hesitate to approve, to endorse it. But even if she did neither, by some odd chance, what then? You and my boy would be man and wife. The question of your going on receiving your income or not going on receiving it would be absurdly immaterial. I have enough for several

daughters-in-law ; Roland has enough for a multitude of wives. . . So you see, my dear, I have thought of everything, weighed everything. Not a single impediment exists ; all is plain sailing. You are married as Flora Marion Kirkland. The Meserole in your name will be dropped, and Flora, when she becomes Mrs. Pearsall, will leave the Bramleigh in her name unprinted as well. You are both little known in the world ; it is not the same as if you had made your social *entrées* at Newport. What close acquaintances really have you ? A few school-friends, who will never suspect the substitution. How, for that matter, could even the Rockfords guess it ? Flora might tell them at Elberon, if she chose, that you are engaged to Roland. His blindness would serve to them as a substantial reason for the quiet marriage and the quick departure." Here Mrs. Garretson touched Marion's brow with her lips. "On all sides, my dear, security, safety. You realize it, you feel it, do you not ?"

Marion gave a doubtful little sigh that made its hearer start. "Is there not one person whom you have forgotten ?"

"Whom ?" came the quick question.

"Lydig Pearsall."

Mrs. Garretson laughed derisively. "What earthly objection could he have ? He must be made to keep silence, however, when Flora tells him. But why, after all, should he be told ? Far better that we should prevail on Flora to let him believe there is no mystery whatever. Let us swear her to secrecy before he comes."

"He has come," said Marion.

"Yes ?"

"They are strolling somewhere together now."

"And he presented himself at Widewood without seeking to see either myself or you ? What incivility !"

"He asked for us both. I did not wish to see him, and Flora gave him some polite excuse. As for yourself, Cousin Eleanor, you were paying that long-delayed visit on the Havishams at Rye."

Just then Flora joined them. The pearl-and-pink of her face had never worn a more blossom-like look than now below the broad garden-hat that shaded it. But she glanced from her sister to Mrs. Garretson in evident trouble, and suddenly broke forth,—

"I'm so sorry ! I'm so miserably sorry !"

"What has happened ?" asked Marion.

"Lydig wishes to see you, Cousin Eleanor. I—I couldn't prevent his demanding to see you."

Mrs. Garretson, with prompt *hauteur*, gave reply :

"Demanding ? An odd word, Flora. What occasions it ?"

"I see !" broke out Marion, with a strange stare into Flora's face. "You have told him !"

Flora burst into tears. "I—I didn't intend—truly I did not. Indeed, I—I refused, at first. But something I said made him suspect. And, besides, I wasn't sure that you would either of you object. You hadn't forbidden me, and, since we're engaged, it hardly seemed wrong, after all. But when he'd got it out of me—and I'm so weak, so wretchedly weak, in Lydig's hands, whenever he does want to get any-

thing out of me—I was quite, *quite* unprepared for his angry and assertive conduct."

"Angry and assertive?" Mrs. Garretson repeated. Her words were defiant, though her face had fallen.

"He is waiting down-stairs," faltered Flora. "He is in the little Japanese parlor. I made him go in there, as it's the safest room, you know,—so far from any part of the house that Roland frequents, even now that he has learned to move about alone. And Lydig *would* wait for you somewhere, Cousin Eleanor. He's determined to have a talk with you. He says he will not leave Widewood until he has seen you."

"He might have sent me a more gentlemanlike message," muttered Eleanor Garretson. But the restraint of fear was in her mien, now, as she moved toward the door. "I will see him, of course; I must, it appears. Flora, you spoke of his anger. Does it concern the idea of Roland's marriage to Marion?"

"Yes," said Flora. She was wiping her eyes, and scanning the tear-marks they left on her handkerchief as though she pitied them for having been shed. "He—he will not have the marriage at all. He says—but, oh, you must hear him yourself. He's determined that you shall."

Mrs. Garretson went to Marion and put both arms about her. "We were so confident, my dear, a minute ago! Our sky hadn't a cloud, had it? Now comes this sudden storm. God help Roland if we can't weather it! But, of course, his health has returned. He's a man again; he is able to bear suffering, and if the worst happens, he must face it—that's all. Feeling and knowing the full measure of your love for him, I can't think he's much more to be pitied, my dear, than are you."

"Never mind me," said Marion; "do not give me a thought. I wish I could go down there and meet him with you, but I cannot, and you understand why." Then her voice, to which Flora had been listening, became a whisper. All, afterward, that Flora heard was this: "I believe it is possible; I will spare no effort to bring it about."

The little Japanese parlor, as it was called, off in a wing of the big, straggling house, had once been the pride both of Roland and his mother. During a certain summer of the past they had loaded it with Oriental embellishments, not a few of which they had brought themselves from travels in the East. But of late the riot of intertwined colors in walls and ceiling, in rugs and tapestries, had produced both on mother and son a weariness of disrelish. Just before Roland's illness they had talked of treating the whole chamber like an exploded fashion, and of distributing its best effects of bronzes and china and fabrics throughout other portions of the house. "When we got the thing up," said Mrs. Garretson, "it was new. Now it has the tang of vulgarity about it. I find it actually disagreeable." But she had never found it half so disagreeable as when to-day she entered it and saw the tall figure of Lydig Pearsall staring critically at the enamellings on a huge dragon-pictured jar.

"Good-morning," he said, not looking to see if she offered him a

hand, his manner hard as it was polite. "You've a charming nest of treasures here, Mrs. Garretson."

She paid no heed to his mention of the room. She knew very well that he was not to be won over by soft treatment. She had always disliked him, as she had disliked his dead father, whom she considered that he greatly resembled, and whom she had thought a man of small brain and massive self-esteem.

Sinking on one of the richly embroidered divans, she took from a lacquered table near it an ostrich fan which lay there. With this she shaded her face from a shaft of sun that pierced the luxurious gloom of the fantastic little place, and said, in tones curt, direct, and without a sign of the covert terror at her heart, "Flora tells me, Lydig, that you have made a demand to see me, and made it in anger. Be good enough to explain, if you please, why you have done so."

He pulled at his moustache with one hand, and she saw the other knot itself in shadow beside him.

"Really, Mrs. Garretson, I did not suppose you would open conversation in quite such curt terms."

"Why not? Your message was curt enough, if Flora delivered it correctly."

He smiled with a bright hardness. Then he replied, as the smile vanished completely from his face, leaving it stern,—

"I was indignant, and I have a right to be indignant."

"Because of a certain intended plan on my part?"

"Yes,—yours and Miss Marion's."

"Leave Marion out, if you please. I am responsible for the whole matter."

A sneer crept into his lips. "You mean that she has appointed you the keeper of her conscience?"

"She has submitted to my dictation. Her love for my son and her deep compassion for him have both swayed her in so behaving."

"Very possibly. And neither would empower me with the least right of interference, were it not that Flora has become my promised wife."

"You object, then, to the deception proposed?"

"Absolutely."

She looked him full in the eyes, a rigid challenge on her still, pale features. "And if I resist your objection, what will you do? Will you break off your engagement with Flora?"

"By no means," he said, frowning stormily.

"I see: you will noise the thing abroad. Or perhaps you will tell my poor Roland. A fine recourse, truly! You perceive, I am not politic with you, Lydig. I know your nature very well. It is obstinate, self-opinionated, and not a little arrogant."

"Thanks." His monosyllable had so indifferent a ring that open disdain could not have made it more cutting.

"Besides, this is a case where anger, if you please, begets resentment. I am not accustomed to orders, dictations, and disapprovals from a person of your age. However you may make me fear you, putting up with high-handed treatment from you is another affair."

"Then you do fear me?" He said this with low emphasis, leaning one arm on a mantel just behind him. A green-and-gold idol, with a cavernous mouth, grinned over his shoulder. At this moment Mrs. Garretson preferred its nightmare ugliness to the small blond head and light, cold eyes and clean-lined jaws of Lydig Pearsall.

"Fear you? Why not? A mere infant, with a loaded pistol, is dangerous."

"And I'm rather older than a mere infant, Mrs. Garretson," he said, laughing crisply. "I haven't the faintest unkindly feeling, however, against you, or Miss Marion, or your son. There was a time—not so long ago—when I held Roland to be my friend. With his wretched affliction came a change toward me. But I bear him not the shadow of a grudge: why should I? Heaven knows what queer, tortuous things *I* might have done if the same knock-down blow had floored me. My only point is this: he must not marry a woman thinking her the woman whom I shall soon marry myself. On that point *I* am firm. You must see that the whole matter is not only fraudulent, but ridiculous."

"Stop there, please," said Mrs. Garretson. She was softly swaying the ostrich fan before her face. While letting it fall at her side she almost plunged her seated body forward, and raised one hand, shaking the index finger at Pearsall.

"I will show you just how fraudulent, just how ridiculous it is!" she exclaimed. And then many sentences, explanatory, voluble, pathetic, imploring, accusing, reminding, broke from her lips. Her pride had collapsed; her impetuous passion of motherhood lived in the sparkle of eyes, the play of nostril, lip, chin, hands, the dip and sway and swerve of bust, shoulders, arms. She forgot her antipathy to the man whom she addressed; she besought his mercy, yet less with simple supplication than with supplication and argument interblended. At the end it seemed to her that he was maddeningly unmoved. "This—this full disclosure of mine," she gasped, "leaves you stony! . . . Yet"—and she caught up the dropped fan, leaning back against the ornate silk cushions behind her—"yet perhaps I am wrong, and you see that to do as I wish will be to spare a most unfortunate fellow-creature the fresh torment I've described."

Still standing, with head a little bowed, and with something white softly twirled between his fingers, Pearsall said, in cool accents, as she paused,—

"May I smoke a cigarette here?"

"No."

She sprang up, caught the slim white cube from his clasp, and flung it on the floor.

He dropped back, a step or two, before her grieved, hueless face.

"Oh," he murmured, with an effect of wounded courtesy, "you want quick and rough dealing, then?" In an instant his face grew one contemptuous revolt.

"Of course it would all be an aid to your son, this humbug that you propose. Yet not for an instant would I authorize it. Flora Marion,—Marion Flora; yes, I have heard of this before. And you

would turn it into a comedy, precisely of the sort that they do at the theatres, to make us laugh. I admit, if you choose, Mrs. Garretson, the tragic element in the comedy; that is only too obvious. But to imagine, my dear lady,—you, so sensible, so experienced,—that I would permit your son to marry Flora's sister, he supposing she were Flora! Bah! for what do you take me?"

He thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets and peered stoopingly at the panels of an intricately carved cabinet, his head partly in shadow, his air that of one who leans to smell some rare flower.

"I take you," said Mrs. Garretson, hurrying to his side, "for just the man I've always thought you,—cruel and selfish! Except for you," she went on, quite wildly now, "Roland would never have fallen from his horse,—never have met with the accident that leaves him what he is."

He veered round. "Oh, you reproach me with that, do you? Well . . ." He shrugged his shoulders. "I shan't answer such a purely peevish accusation; I'll only declare myself wholly unwilling that your son and Marion Kirkland shall marry one another in this preposterous, unheard-of way."

Making a movement of the head that expressed fatigue and despair, with also a savor of disgust, Mrs. Garretson drew backward. "This, then," she said, "is your final answer?"

"My final answer."

Something suddenly made her think of Marion's farewell whispers. "Are you so certain," she inquired, forming each word with lips that fluttered like blown edges of paper,—"are you so certain, Lydig, that Flora will consent—?"

There her sentence ended. Flora had slipped into the room. She faced Pearsall for a moment; then she moved toward Mrs. Garretson. While stealing an arm about this lady's waist, she shot a glance at her lover.

"Our engagement ends from this moment," she said.

Pearsall half choked a cry. "You can't mean it, Flora!"

"But I do mean it. Come, Cousin Eleanor." She drew Mrs. Garretson toward the door.

Pearsall sprang to her side. "You've listened, then?"

"For quite a while."

He saw a look on Flora's face chillingly unfamiliar. It had never before occurred to him that she at all resembled her sister; now he perceived a likeness. All her flower-soft beauty was overfilmed by a firmness inexpressible yet distinct,—a firmness, and a sternness as well.

The dread of losing her swept through him like an electric pain. Flashingly the scope and force of his love were revealed to him.

"Stay—stay," he said, between whitening lips. "I must speak with you. Our engagement broken! Impossible!"

"You have made the keeping of it impossible. Come, Cousin Eleanor."

"No. Flora, listen. I must have a few words with you."

The girl stood irresolute for a moment. Then she murmured something in Mrs. Garretson's ear. Her relative nodded, and at once

glided across the threshold. Flora, with a most uncharacteristic coolness, shut the door behind her.

After that an interview was held between Flora and Pearsall. It lasted a good while. He began it confident of success, but by degrees he found failure blocking every move. A weak woman can be very strong when human pity nerves her. Flora would listen to no compromise but one. The old spell of Marion's influence was potent, yet this did not alone sway her. She had once come near to loving Roland; in a way she loved him still, and in a wider, more spiritual way she had grown to hold his future happiness as a thing it would be sacrilege to overlook. All the while, too, she had an instinctive certainty that prolonged inflexibility would end in triumph. And triumph it became.

At last, with a bitter laugh, Pearsall caught up his hat and prepared to vanish.

"I don't know you in this *rôle*," he said. "Well, perhaps your playing it now is a fortunate warning to me."

Flora echoed his laugh. "And what about *my* warning?" she returned. "I have seen how you can defend with selfish pride an act of cruelty."

Pearsall tossed his hat upon a flowered divan. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "don't you know that I'd lose an arm, Flora, really, to serve you?"

"I've requested no such sacrifice."

"But you expect me to permit Roland to marry your sister in the belief that he's marrying you."

"And you grudge him that comfort."

"You're not putting it the right way."

"I'm putting it my way, if you please."

"Oh, put it any way,—I don't care!" cried Pearsall. And he caught her to his breast. "Here I go head and shoulders into the conspiracy—for it's nothing else. I'll keep the secret from my own very shadow. But woe to all four of us if Roland ever learns the truth!"

"How can he ever learn the truth?" said Flora, as she gave him her lips to kiss with a victorious condescension. "He's incurably blind, you know; he will be in Europe all the rest of his life. I only hope he may die before Marion does, and no doubt he will, for the awful trial he has passed through must have had its weakening effect. But meanwhile their marriage will make the most splendid companionship. The new book he is composing—one might almost say that they are composing it together, though she will not for an instant allow this—promises to become his masterpiece. . . . And so, Lydig," she broke off, "I brought you round, did I not? I'm not quite the feeble and yielding ninny you thought me."

"Flora! As if I dreamed you were anything of the sort!"

"Well, let this be a warning,—that's all. I've a touch of the wilful minx in me; I showed it that day when I rode your wild mare; but never mind. Still, though I'm shallow and feeble and whimsical, always remember hereafter that there will occasionally come a time

with me when if I want a thing very much I'll either have it or there'll be trouble. Take me all in all, I'm a strange mixture of meekness and the opposite. You might as well be prepared for this, Lydig. I don't want to impose on you. It seems horrible to joke on such a subject, but please bear clearly in mind that if poor Roland marries Marion with his eyes shut, as one might say, you're not marrying me on any such doubtful terms."

Flora had spoken truly when she called herself a strange mixture of meekness and its reverse. Not long afterward she entered the presence of Marion and Mrs. Garretson, pale, faint, almost tottering.

They placed her in a cushioned chair, and while one bathed her brows with cologne, the other chafed her chill hands.

"I'm such a coward," she said, her eyes half closed and her breath in flutters. "I do love him, you know, but I was bound to end everything if he refused. And at last I made him yield. The danger's all past now. The lion is tame as a lamb. You see, Cousin Eleanor, I'm not quite the nonentity you've thought me."

"Flora," cried Mrs. Garretson, with a kiss on either of the hands that she was chafing, "I asked you once to forgive me for the rude and foolish words I spoke weeks ago, or, rather, that my misery spoke, making me its reckless victim. But now I ask you again to forgive me,—and with a deeper penitence, a still sincerer regret."

At the same moment a smile of infinite relief flooded the face of Roland's mother, and Flora's little sentence, "The danger's all past, now," seemed ringing through her spirit like a clash of joy-bells.

XVII.

In a day or two came a letter from the Rockfords at Elberon, expressing joy at the prospect of Flora's volunteered return. "We can so thoroughly understand," wrote Rachel, "that you find it dull in such a quiet place, especially when you can do nothing for poor Mr. Garretson, and when his mother and Marion are so completely absorbed in his care. By all means arrange to remain with us till at least the first of September. We shall not go back to Philadelphia before the fifteenth."

Meanwhile Roland's mother had once more heard from Mrs. Kirkland, who was then at Vichy. In early September, this lady now again positively declared, she would return. And in early September, Mrs. Garretson again decided, her son's marriage should occur. Mrs. Kirkland should never know of it till she herself was on her way eastward across the Atlantic, accompanying the newly wedded pair. And then Flora should be her informant, meeting whatever storm of surprise and annoyance might first follow the disclosure.

A few days after Flora had left Widewood for the second time, Roland told Marion that he had just been having a long and very satisfactory talk with his mother.

"Perhaps you can guess on what subject," he added; and the deepened tenderness of his smile sent a confirming thrill through the girl's veins.

So it had come at last. There was no receding now. It was to begin a new kind of happiness, yet it was also to seal final bonds with a new sort of dread,—a dread that might never die throughout all the rest of her life.

She made him no reply, but he reached out for her hand as though seeking one, and appeared to find it in the delicate vibrations of her fingers.

"Our marriage, I mean, my dear. I suppose she has told you? Yes? She said that she mentioned early September. The nearer the better for me, you know. But then this going abroad. I—I hardly liked it, at first. Still, I had forgotten, and most selfishly, that you have never been in Europe. Hearing your impressions will be such a pleasure. It will not only be like getting back my sight again, but like getting back a new sight, with all the sensitive visual receptivities of early youth. How I shall enjoy listening to the *genre* pictures you will paint me with your voice,—or seeing them with the eyes of my soul! I have looked, I believe, at nearly all the great things in Europe. What an experience to gaze at them over again, Flora, with you for my guide-book,—a luminary in that line, Heaven knows,—the kind of guide-book that never was, till now, on sea or land!"

Next afternoon Mrs. Garretson and Marion took a stroll together along paths near the house, while waiting the carriage that was to bear Roland and her companion on one of the long drives to which of late they had grown accustomed.

"I always remember," said Mrs. Garretson, "how the waning summer, here in Westchester, touches one as its most perfect time. The days shorten, but their sunsets are richer, and often the evening coolness will put a sparkle into the sky an hour before the stars have added theirs. The clouds take a rounded, rolling, bluish look, like those that hang yonder above the Sound. The purples and saffrons of those darling weeds we call aster and golden-rod peep at us from every stretch of roadside. There's a kind of drowsy dignity about latter August here. Her spiteful tempests have ended. She is not yet autumn, as in Italy and Southern France. She is simply peace, contentment, matron-like maturity, with a promise of all that splendid bannered ruin which is to come afterward, making pageantries among thousands of trees. You will not see Widewood when its boughs are ablaze. But never mind that." And here her voice fell, yet with somehow a hopeful and joyous cadence. "You will be among scenes far more interesting, Marion. Poor Widewood, beautiful as she is in her rustic way, cannot compare with them."

Mrs. Garretson paused, raising a hand. "There is the carriage, now, crunching up to the door. Roland will be waiting. No doubt he too hears the wheels on the gravel; I fancy that his hearing grows sharper every day: don't you?" She suddenly kissed Marion on either cheek. "You don't look half as happy, somehow, as you should, my dear, my soon-to-be daughter!"

"*You* look very happy," said Marion, with a dim smile.

"Say peaceful and contented, like this weather I've just been talking of. 'Happy' isn't the word, now, and never can be any more. But oh, Marion" (and she closed her eyes for a moment, and laid one hand on her bosom), "I've gained a sense of rest *here*. The suspense, the turmoil, the fever, are all past. His future, dear boy, though darkened, shall still be lit with one lovely star. A certain horror has faded from my thoughts of him. I seem to have fought a stern fight and won it. Now are given me the fruits of my victory. And all has happened in so short a time! When they first told me that he would never see again, I had hours in which day was like midnight. But nature is so cunningly strange in her repairs, her restorations, her consolments! I began to hope again—you know for what; you, of all others, ought to know. And so many would call it an unjustifiable deceit! Let them; I gain *my* justification from one source,—*his* face, resigned, tranquillized, overbrimmed with the living proof that our mercy—yours and mine—has been wisdom as well. And now, Marion, for the calm exploitation of that mercy, through years that I trust may bring to both of you—to all three of us—a long, sweet harvest of serene joy. We have nothing to answer for, we two, except the effort in behalf of his happiness. We have cemented the shattered statue of his life as best we could: as best we can we will remelodize its broken music. For me the storm of sorrow has passed. I feel that misfortune has deigned to make with me one of its most surprising truces. I am thankful, and I ask no kinder clemency. After great conflict, great turmoil, I seem to hear the watchword, 'All is well.' Pray Heaven that I do not hear it only in fancy; and to that prayer, Marion, I am certain of your silent 'Amen.'"

Roland's drive with Marion lasted till dusk. As the carriage stopped at the door of Widewood, there was no sign of Mrs. Garretson waiting to receive them. This appeared strange to the girl, though she forgot it while aiding Roland to dismount and giving him into the charge of Otway, who emerged from the back shadow of the piazza, a slim, elderly figure, with smooth-shorn, kindly face. And soon Otway found a chance to murmur in Marion's ear,—

"Mrs. Garretson, miss, is in her room, and would like to see you there as soon as you can conveniently manage."

Marion started. She searched, in the dimness, Otway's placid eyes. They told her nothing. Soon she hurried up-stairs, wondering, fearing, doubting, and with not the faintest reason why she should feel her peace of mind at all ruffled. How natural that Cousin Eleanor should be tired, unnerved, touched with a grim spell of headache, and had thought best to lie down for a little steadyng repose! Had she not said, such a short while ago, that all fears were laid at rest, that the future for all three of them was replete with quiet joy? And what a perfect drive she had just had with Roland! There had been moments when it seemed almost better that he did not see,—that he let her see for him, and tell him about the great wreath-elms towering from certain spaces in the roadside, of the far, silver-blue levels that were the waters of the Sound, viewed from gently commanding inland hills, across meadowy

lapses and between bushy verdures of orchard or grove. "Oh, yes," he would reply, "I remember it here; I drove or rode here so often in other days." And then he would say to her, "Think, dearest, of our drives out into the Roman Campagna! I will listen, and you will speak. As you describe to me the tomb of Cæcilia Metella, the temple of Vesta, the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, the Aqueduct of Nero, the church of San Paolo *fuori le mura*, a hundred sights like this, greater or lesser, I will listen and either give you their names or ask you if certain lights and shadows are upon them, and you will answer me that they look thus and so, at that special moment."

Throughout this recent drive the calm that Roland's mother had spoken of as having descended on herself had benignantly thrilled Marion. Those words, heard so lately, had haunted her memory with witching persistence while she and Roland were borne through sweet-smelling country haunts, where the great elder thickets flaunted their purple berries and the humbler wild-rose copses bared their scarlet, nut-like leavings of the pale pink, loose-petalled blossoms now blown and vanished:

"After great turmoil, great conflict, I seem to hear the watchword, 'All is well.'"

And yet it was with an unconquerable sinking of the heart that Marion now paused at the door of Mrs. Garretson's room. She knocked, and almost instantly Roland's mother admitted her.

"Come in, Marion. You're alone? Yes, I see that you are. Otway told you, then?"

The voice made Marion shiver. A lamp burned on the table near one of the windows, just where she had often seen it before. But now its yellow rays seemed to throw a spectral white on Mrs. Garretson's face.

"Yes, Otway told me you wanted me. You're—not ill?"

"No; oh, no."

"Something has happened, Cousin Eleanor?"

"A—a letter has happened, Marion."

"A letter?"

"Sit here,—by this table, near the lamp. There, that is right. Now, here's the letter." Mrs. Garretson laid an open paper where the light flooded it. "Shall I read, or will you?"

Marion searched the face of her interlocutress. Its feminine nobility of outline had long ago made her declare it handsome. Then she had seen it haggard and grief-ravaged. Afterward the old look of composure and content had partially returned to it. Now this look on a sudden had fled. She almost seemed like the tortured woman of previous weeks.

"I will read it," said Marion; and she took up the letter.

It was from Graham Heath, Roland's old college friend. Just after the two country doctors' announcement had roused in her that desperate rebound of doubt and denial, and even while waiting the arrival of the specialists whom she had summoned, Mrs. Garretson had flung off a heart-broken letter to Heath in Berlin, describing the accident and its results, imploring him to tell her if he believed the case hopeless, and making plain a fervent desire to have him then at

the bedside of her son. Afterward, when came the calm of despair which had succeeded that first frenzy of insurrection, and when a new spiritual tumult was created by complications it is needless to name, she had wholly forgotten the letter, and given as little heed to the very fact of Heath's existence as though he were in Burmah rather than Berlin.

And now, after this protracted interval, his reply had reached her. It was simple, eloquent, self-confident. You could see that friendship was a cogent force in it, but professional security was clearly apparent as well. He insisted that there was a strong chance of restoring to Roland his lost sight. A new method of dealing with the paralyzed optic nerve had been recently tried with great success by his dear friend and former master, Dr. Heinrich Gottlieb. The chief agency was an electrical one, but employed with an alternation of somewhat bold shocks and extremely delicate currents. "This method," wrote Graham Heath, "I am literally hungering to employ on Roland. When your letter reached me I was on the verge of a three-months visit to America. Hard work, made harder by a course of volunteered lectures throughout half a dozen different German cities, had pulled me down in a most warning way. On hearing from you, dear Mrs. Garretson, I had determined to start forthwith. But scarcely three days later a fever took hold of me, and for several weeks I was prey to a sickness dismal if not dangerous. Perhaps it might have been both if some friends had not brought me to some ill-known but excellent baths, which have now made me quite my old self. The first thing I thought of, when my brain got rid of the incapacitating vapors which had blurred it, was poor old Roland's trouble. Yet for a fortnight after my return to Berlin Dr. Gottlieb would not let me take pen in hand. He promised that provided I obeyed him he would teach me every least detail of his new electrical method, which already I had in great measure mastered. Since then he has kept his word, and I now feel empowered to treat Roland as capably as even his honored self." More writing followed, and then came three significant sentences: "I shall mail these pages by one of the Hamburg steamers just two days before I myself sail on the French line. Two more days in Paris are necessary to me, on account of some professional visits and purchases. It is therefore quite possible that hardly a week will elapse between the time of your receiving this letter and my bodily appearance below the roof of your 'Widewood.'"

Pale, and with hand that shook, Marion gave back the letter. Then the two women sat and searched one another's eyes.

"I recollect telling you," Mrs. Garretson said, "something about this Graham Heath."

"Yes. It was before Roland's mishap. You were talking one day about his earlier life at college, and the foreign travels that followed it."

"So you remember, then, just who he is?"

"Oh, perfectly."

"But I myself forgot if I told you of having written him the letter to which this is an answer."

"No; you did not tell me that," replied Marion.

The other swept her look from side to side in dismayed perturbation. "And now, my dear, this—this thunderbolt!"

"A thunderbolt of hope," said Marion. Still pale, she had seemingly grown tranquil.

"Hope? Yes. Of course, yes: why not? Graham will come here with his plans and purposes. He may bring light from darkness,—who knows? Science, nowadays, appears to be trenching closer and closer upon the miraculous. Certainly I wish it," she went on, with a pensive wildness; "how can I, or you, avoid wishing it? Only yesterday I would have laid down my life to have it happen." Then she paused, clenched her lips tightly together, and frowned with an agonized perplexity. "But since that yesterday so much has occurred! Oh, Marion," she burst forth, "I'm rambling on like this, and you are sitting there silent, and we both know just what our real thoughts are, and we've neither of us the courage to say we are *sorry*! It sounds too brutal, does it not?"

"I am not sorry," said Marion, with a beautiful melancholy smile.

"Nor I! nor I! And yet we can't help—" Here Mrs. Garretson went round to Marion, and took her in both arms, and murmured, with her face bowed on the girl's shoulder,—

"Oh, what is it that we can't help feeling?" She lifted her head and kissed Marion's white cheek. "Let us be frank with one another, my dear. We wouldn't prevent it for kingdoms. We want him just as he once was. And yet—there's his marriage so near,—there's the risk of what he might do if he found out you're not *she*,—there's the utter dislocation and overthrow of our plans, inventions, imaginings... My God, Marion!" She suddenly rose to her feet, with both hands laid knotted against her bosom. "To think that I should not shout with joy at even the vague prospect of it! To think that I should not run in burning haste, eager to have him know of such a glorious chance!" She covered her face, and stood like that for a good minute, till once more in the hollow of her hands her voice sounded, issuing between loose-joined fingers as though between the bars of a cell, "Oh, life, life, which are greater, your mysteries or your mockeries? For, God knows, you teem with both!"

XVIII.

For reasons which it would demand close nautical inquiries to discover, Graham Heath came driving up to the door of Widewood in a stage-coach from the station, one morning only three days after the arrival of his letter. Mrs. Garretson was the first to meet him, and while they looked into one another's faces it happened as it always does with those whom the unbenign years have kept long apart. He saw the young matron of his memories, and compared her with this new vision in which every faintest change of line, tinting, or frosted tress was vividly manifest; and she, on her own side, saw the slender, keen-

faced, flaxen-haired boy of her memories, and compared him with this present image to which time had given traces of its cruelty, yet also of its maturing dignities. Each deplored the other's altered state, yet each strove to conceal it behind the brightness of welcome.

"Shall you want to see Roland before luncheon?" asked Mrs. Garretson, after they had talked together for a good half-hour.

"I want to lunch *with* him," said Heath, in his old gay, hearty manner. "Do you mean that he is served apart—not at the general table—now that he is physically well?"

"We've scarcely a general table, as you call it, Graham. We are only three in family. Roland's meals are given him—I mean that in a literal sense, you know—either by myself or his old servant, Otway, in his own apartments. Sometimes, however, Miss Kirkland officiates."

"Miss Kirkland? Oh, yes: one of the twins, I suppose. Roland wrote me of their coming to you here: it seems such an age ago, and yet it is not. He joked about your sense of responsibility as their fated chaperon at Newport. That was in the last letter I had from him,—poor, dear old boy!" Here Heath made an inquiring pause. "The other Miss Kirkland,—the other twin?" he said.

"She is away, staying with friends on the Jersey coast."

"Oh, I see. . . And so Roland prefers retirement during his meals? Well, I confess to you that I'm hungry. The sea has done wonders both for my appetite and my health. Perhaps it will be best to delay my meeting with Roland till after luncheon."

"As you please."

"He does not know that I have yet arrived?"

"No."

"But he expects me?"

"I've told him you might come soon, Graham."

"You say that a little—sadly. Does he distrust my power of curing him?"

"No and yes. But he is full of hope."

Heath nodded, drumming with one hand on his knee. "So am I. You don't mind my beginning the course soon,—to-morrow, if Roland is willing?"

"Oh, the sooner the better, for him."

"I took a certain liberty during the short time that I lingered in New York. It was to engage an assistant, a sort of ocular nurse. He will arrive here this evening. He is a necessity, and, by the way, a highly recommended one; the hospital people had nothing but praise for him. You approve this?"

"Entirely. You might have engaged ten, if you had chosen. This big old house has ample room for them."

"Ten!" laughed Heath, with genial scorn. "Why, my dear lady, one seemed to me almost too many. I want, for the space of a week,—a full week, if not longer,—absolute quiet and repose in Roland's quarters. He must not stir from one room, and that room must be inky in its darkness."

"Yes, Graham?"

"Not a ray of light must enter it, or, at least, not a ray that he can

observe. My reason for wanting operations to begin to-morrow is because of the delay which he has already undergone. It has been too long,—too long. I fear . . .”

As his voice fell into stillness his hearer echoed, “ You fear, Graham ?”

“ I don’t fear anything,” he cried, gayly. “ I only expect and anticipate. But it would have been better—I confess this to you, though I don’t wish Roland to dream it—if that infernal fever hadn’t kept me from coming earlier.”

“ Dear, kind Graham !”

“ Nearly all my needful traps were with me in those two portentous trunks your men have lately carried up-stairs. A few others will be brought to-night by the nurse . . . And now, Mrs. Garretson, please make me sure on one point: will you promise, notwithstanding all your devoted fondness for Roland (of which I am so well aware), to visit his apartment only at the special times when I give you permission ? . . Yes ? . . Thanks. Remember, it is a positive promise. What I shall greatly wish to avoid is the slightest emotional disturbance. His nervous system will be racked enough, while I have him in charge.”

“ Racked, Graham ?”

“ Beneficially, in a sense; but, still, there’s no other word. You will marvel when I tell you that Dr. Gottlieb, with precisely this same system I shall employ, has already restored twelve people, believed totally blind, to perfect sight.”

“ And in these cases, Graham, was the application immediate ?”

Heath stared at the opposite wall. “ In most of them it was immediate,” he brought out, with a hint of unwillingness. “ And the other four—well, well, they were all bad cases,—very bad cases indeed.”

Marion appeared at luncheon, and Mrs. Garretson was inwardly touched by her liveliness and affability, knowing how factitious they were, how forced up from the turbulence of a heart in strange conflict with itself. Quite promptly Graham seemed won by her, and now and then it struck Roland’s mother that certain sympathetic references on the girl’s part might rouse his suspicions of a tender attachment.

She mentioned this to Marion after Heath had gone up-stairs to her son’s apartments, a journey which he insisted on taking alone, with Otway as his sole guide.

“ Still,” Mrs. Garretson said, half musingly, “ I suppose Roland will tell him that. They are such old friends, and their talk will be completely confidential, on my boy’s part, at least.”

“ You did not warn Roland, then ?” quickly asked Marion.

“ Warn him, my dear? How could I? To warn him would mean to distress him,—to fill him with the most agitating curiosity. ‘ What ?’ he would have exclaimed, ‘ can I not make known my engagement, my approaching marriage, to Graham Heath, of all people in the world ?’ Indeed, with his keen, synthetic mind, made more powerful, as I sometimes fancy, by his blindness, he might grow abruptly suspicious. And, as we see, Graham wants him in a placid frame of mind. Imagine any such disturbance as the one at which I have hinted !”

Marion merely sighed for answer. It seemed to her watcher that of late her face, never strikingly pretty yet never unpleasingly plain, and always attractive and engaging in the finest feminine sense, had become touched, even ethereally masked, by a beauty of gentle patience, self-repression, heroism. And yet both pain and fear gave signs, fitful and fleeting, about lips and brows.

When she next met Graham Heath it was to find him full of exhilaration. Roland, he declared, was an excellent subject for immediate treatment. "My dear Miss Kirkland," he added, with eyes in a mischievous yet sympathetic sparkle, "I've never seen a man who has got such a knock-down blow as he, so obstinately and illogically happy."

Marion flushed, and gave him a look which he translated as maid-
enly shyness, while pulling at the feathery blond beard pronounced by his hostess a most "Germanizing" feature of his visage.

"You didn't tell me," he continued, shaking one finger at her in gay reproof, "that our friend was threatened with such a perilous heart-trouble."

"I hope you don't think it perilous, Dr. Heath?"

"Oh, we can manage it, I trust, by removing the cause. Not permanently," he laughed on; "only for one week, if all goes well." His face sobered. "Really, my dear young lady, I want you to stay away from him for that time with a most obedient persistence. I only hope you will not have to stay longer."

He said those last words with an inflection of such unmistakable pity and sympathy that Marion felt a momentary abashed dizziness. She could imagine the tales of her devotion, her fidelity, her literary aid and coöperation, which Roland had already found time to pour into the ear of his friend. Ah, was ever position crueler, more abnormally trying, than hers? Here was a man of science whose efforts of cure would probably gain new stimulus from the recent knowledge of Roland's love—for whom? A girl he had never seen in the past with lover's eyes, and from whose disclosed face he might turn with indignant amazement.

"I will wait for the end," she kept thinking, "and I will make of every intervening day a prayer that he may recover. Then, if he does recover, I will have a terrible ordeal to confront,—an ordeal of shame. But if they never give him back his sight, my joy will not be impious or selfish,—the kind of joy that I shall feel,—for it will partake of a certain righteous exultation. Righteous, because my continued presence at his side—my retarded yet finally accomplished marriage with him—will serve to lull the fresh disappointment caused by the quenching of this new hope."

And in her next interview, which was the last before her exile from his society, she clearly perceived how his late talk with Heath had fed and fired this hope into an ardor of great energy and brilliance. With almost his farewell kiss, Roland said to her,—

"Think, Flora, of the perfect future that now may be waiting us both!"

"Perfect indeed!" she thought; and scalding tears filled the eyes to which his own, shining yet powerless, were turned.

XIX.

With the following day Heath's efforts began in strenuous earnest. At the end of the first five or six hours he informed Mrs. Garretson that there had been a certain amount of severe pain, and that Roland had borne it with fine fortitude. The nurse, he found, was very capable, and Otway showed nice promise as his assistant. All suffering had now dwindled to a mere occasional distress, and by to-morrow it would have vanished completely. Mrs. Garretson might see him for precisely five minutes that evening, though "see" was hardly a permissible term, as they would meet in pitchy darkness.

"For myself," said Graham, "you must not think me neglectful of my patient if I stay away from him an hour or two at a time. The trouble is, we are too old friends, and he is always wanting to talk on things that make his brain-circulation more rapid than I desire. He is very fond, for example, of talking about his engagement."

"Yes?" Marion said, beginning to be tormented again. (Mrs. Garretson was just then absent.)

"Of your beautiful constancy,—that is what he calls it. And he is right, my dear Miss Kirkland. It must have been beautiful, all these weeks."

"I—I don't see why it should be extolled," she hesitated, "or thought otherwise than quite natural."

"You do not see. But I think others could,—many others. For it is not—pardon me, but it is not as though Roland and you were quite of an age. He is like me, you know,—or was till lately. Everybody wondered why he had not married. There's a certain sobriety, tenacity,—what shall I call it?—which one expects from an older woman. But youth like yours . . . well, perhaps we're too prone to call it another name for flightiness."

"I suppose," said Marion, "that it all depends upon how deeply the love is lodged." Then she fumbled awkwardly with a button on her dress, and added something about bereavement making true love stronger still, and soon grew hot and cold by turns, thinking how this very man to whom she spoke might learn, before long, of her real relations toward Roland, and feel the ridiculous falsity of statements like these.

But Graham tossed at her a full, gay trill of laughter, which made her realize, desolated though she felt at heart, the affection he had long ago roused in one whom she herself held so dear. "Come, now," he cried, with what struck poor Marion as the most wholesome sort of heartiness, "since you have all the romanticism of a young sweetheart, Miss Kirkland, I insist upon your discarding despondency for hope, which is another characteristic of youth."

"Oh, I do hope," she said, with a sudden candor that it relieved her keenly to express. It lighted her face in a way that charmed him and made him want to know her better, this paragon of *inamoratas*, concerning whom his patient had already told him such rosily pleasant things. After this, through the next three or four days, they grew swiftly more and more intimate, and she got to be fond of his company,

breathing as it did of another presence sepulchred in darkness, so near her yet so far aloof. Often it seemed to her as if she were two women in one,—now longing for news that he had a chance of restored sight, now trembling at the mortification and despair such an event might involve.

Always Mrs. Garretson, after brief visits to the darkened room, would bear her messages full of anxious tenderness. "If I could only hear them with the gladness they deserve," she once whispered back. "If I could only feel that bad news would not stir me with pleasure,—a pleasure infamously wicked, I know, and yet defying my best struggles to crush it down!"

One day Heath brought her what might, in a general sense, be considered bad news. The system, thus far, he said, had not given him a glimpse of success. But Roland was not in the least discouraged; neither was he. The week had nearly ended, it was true, but then at any moment a rally of dormant forces might occur. In more senses than one he was working in the dark. The needed time would now surely be longer than he had expected, but he had no hesitation in affirming that this was due to the interval of time between seizure and treatment.

They had left the house, and were walking, in the affluent morning breeze, among some beds of white and red geraniums that latter summer had made exuberant with velvet leafage and close-knit bloom. Heath caught himself looking for evidence of regret, even sorrow, in Marion's features. But he discovered none, and a certain irrepressible cheerfulness about her air wrought its natural effect of surprise. She said, while stooping to snap from its stem a big knot of scarlet blossoms, which she placed in the front of her gown,—

"If failure *should* come, I sincerely trust that you will count on our great appreciation of your attempted services."

"Oh," he dissented, "but I shall feel like the worst of bunglers!"

"Only *you* will feel so. *He* will not, I am certain. I promise you that." She spoke almost with gayety, and her eyes smiled into his.

"Are you so firmly persuaded of this?" he asked, in a doubting, half-astonished voice. "It will of course be a massive disappointment for you to deal with."

"Never mind," she replied; "I shall not fear the result."

"But your own disappointment?" he asked. "Don't you intensely want to have him see you again?"

"Why not?" she said, in slower and graver voice.

"He is always longing to see you," Heath went on. "I don't know how many times he has spoken to me in raptures of your beauty. He is always comparing your face to one of the Greuze heads in the Louvre, and to another Greuze—'La Contemplazione,' I think he called it—in the San Luca Academy at Rome."

Marion felt the color slipping from her cheeks. "Torture again," she thought. But the smile she forced, and the light of fear—perhaps terror—that brightened in her eyes, made her look almost beautiful, as she said,—

"Ah, don't embarrass me! You know the enchantment that a lover's fancies can invoke."

Not long afterward she said, in forlorn trepidation, to Mrs. Garretson, "Dr. Heath is very shrewd. Can he possibly have suspected anything, do you think?"

"My dear," replied the lady, kissing her, "don't add to your torments by hugging such a new dread. Heaven knows, they are bitter enough as they stand. And I have brought them upon you! Ah, you don't know how that thought sometimes cuts and stings!"

"You must try and not let it," said Marion. "The blame is all mine. I was my own mistress. I could have . . . receded."

"You did recede, dearest. But I dragged you back. Oh, don't deny it. That is what I mean to tell him, if——" But here she suddenly stopped, and soon murmured some low words in Marion's ear.

"You think so?" the girl replied, with neutral voice, drooping her head.

"I am almost sure. Roland has just told me that he begins to doubt, now; and such a little while ago he was buoyant with belief. Trust me, it can't be done. Either Graham's method is more experimental than he imagines, or my poor boy's case is stubbornly incurable."

But two more days had not passed before Heath appeared at luncheon brimming with triumphant joy. Land at last! The dreary voyage was not yet over, but harbor, however dimly, could be glimpsed. Roland had seen; he had undoubtedly seen.

"I caused a delicate ray of sunlight," said Heath, "to reach his eyes. It was like a long gold needle pricking the darkness, and I so arranged that it should strike the ball of the eye midway with its point, airy yet acute. The retina had been put into such an extreme condition of sensitiveness, and the optic nerve had been so urged and titillated by continuous currents of just that electric vibration I had arranged and calculated upon, that 'now or never' was my gladsome professional impulse. There is not the vaguest doubt that he saw me, and Otway, and the nurse."

"Truly! truly!" sprang from Mrs. Garretson.

"We were shadows to him; I doubt if he could tell one of us from another. But it meant something prodigious. It meant that the beginning had come. In another week he will see perfectly."

"Marion!" cried Mrs. Garretson.

She dashed herself upon the back-falling figure, and Heath helped her to bear a languid, relaxed shape to one of the near sofas.

It was hardly a swoon. Marion, with bloodless face, soon swayed herself out of the room, supported by Mrs. Garretson. "You must not come," she said to Heath, waving him away with one hand while she supported Marion with the other.

He was puffing clouds of smoke, on the piazza, from a long-stemmed German pipe, when Mrs. Garretson joined him.

"You can't be surprised, Graham," she said. "It was only a kind of half faint. She is better now. I left her lying down in her own room."

"I am surprised, somehow," Heath said. "I thought she would take it differently."

"More joyfully?" Mrs. Garretson ventured.

"Less tragically."

That evening Roland spoke with his mother while seeing her as a dim, misty figure. Marion did not leave her room for two days after this. The prophesied week had passed. It was now nearing the first of September. Mrs. Garretson had received another letter from Mrs. Kirkland, stating positively that the steamer which bore her would arrive on the third or fourth.

By this time Marion was well again. She left her room and confronted Heath with an appearance of thorough self-governance.

A passionate yearning to tell him all now ruled her. But she restrained it, or rather shame did so for her. "Tell me, Dr. Heath," she at length said, "how long will it be before these dim figures that Roland sees become more distinct?"

"Very soon, I trust. He can now recognize his mother's face when brought near to him."

"Might the freshened power suddenly come to him?"

"That is just the way it will come. At any moment they may summon me—the nurse and Otway—and inform me that he has reached full power of vision."

Marion stared straight at nothing, her lips tremulous. "He will want, then, to see me?"

"You, first of all."

A little later she said to Mrs. Garretson, "I cannot remain here at Widewood. There are servants in Aunt Isabella's Ninth Street house. During these few days before she returns they must take me in. I shall go to town at once and await her coming."

Mrs. Garretson put both hands on the back of a chair near her own. She rested her chin upon it, with close-clenched lips and drawn brows.

"Not yet!" she at length entreated; "not yet!"

"Good heavens, Cousin Eleanor, would you have me wait until he sees perfectly?"

"I would have you wait until I—I've told him."

"Do that when I am gone."

Mrs. Garretson rose, and went to Marion, and drew the girl toward her breast; and then they wept together.

"Oh, Marion, Marion! I love you almost as well as I love him! Not quite, perhaps, but surely almost! And it is such a queer, horrible, distracting thought that hereafter he may be far more unhappy if he regains his sight than if he should live on without it! All had been so perfectly arranged for him, for you, for myself! And now this blessing may come as a curse. May come; I say, and yet . . . who knows if he would not forgive us both?—if he would not go on prizes and cherishing you just the same after he had seen you in your real shape and heard all the story of your merciful love and tenderness?"

"No, no," said Marion, trying to stifle her tears, and failing. "He

believes me Flora. He would not, I think, forgive me. But if he did, it would all end there. After all, men love with their senses first and secondly with their intellects,—men and women both,—unless I am greatly wrong. But if you must tell him everything,—and I suppose you must,—let it be after I have gone."

"Do not go," pleaded the other, "till after I have told him all. Promise me—"

There came a knock at the door. It seemed like a dream to Marion when she presently heard Heath's genial voice as he crossed the threshold. He seemed to be talking far away, though she knew that he was quite near, and that his face was wreathed in smiles.

"What's this?" he cried. "Tears? Both of you in tears? And the hour of victory has arrived,—absolute, unquestioned victory! It has happened just as I suspected. Roland's sight is fully restored. The change came suddenly, just as I knew it would. His room is full of sunshine, and so, I assure you, is his heart. Of course he is asking for—"

"No, no!" broke in Marion. She looked despairingly at Mrs. Garretson. "I—I could not stand it now. The—the shock would be too great." She caught one of Mrs. Garretson's hands, for a second tightly clasping it. "Cousin Eleanor, I am going to my room." As she swept past Heath he clearly saw her face. It was an agony. Two or three tears glistened from its ghastly pallor.

"Marion!" said Mrs. Garretson, hurrying after her, "wait, my dear, wait! I will go with you."

The speaker's arms were again about her as they passed forth together into the hall. They had quite a distance to traverse toward the staircase Marion wished to mount, and their course led straight past the library.

As they reached this door they perceived that it was unclosed, showing each of them a glimpse of the familiar room that lay beyond. And in the space of the open passage stood Roland. He was smiling, and all the vacancy had gone from his countenance, a proud self-confidence replacing it.

"Come and wish me joy," he said, "for I now see perfectly." And he held out both hands to his mother, who was nearest him.

"Graham has just—just—told me," she stammered. She gave him her hands, and then he put an arm about her waist.

"You're very pale; you've been crying," he said. "Ah, you should not take it like that! And Marion!" he exclaimed, as the girl moved unsteadily down the hall, "Marion! have you no word of gratulation?"

She turned, putting one hand to her forehead, as though giddiness urged the gesture. Mrs. Garretson hastened to her side.

"Speak to him!" she whispered, vibrantly. "You must!"

Marion struggled with her in silent anguish. Again came the whisper, "A few words, then leave all to me."

"And—I can—go, then?—I can go at once?" quivered the reply.

Roland had now stepped back into the library, as if expecting that they would both follow him there. This Mrs. Garretson did, forcing Marion's trembling form to do the same. Then with a backward

sweep of the hand she closed the door (meaning this for a signal to Heath, if he were anywhere near, not to enter), and the three stood facing one another.

Roland took Marion's cold, limp hand, pressing it warmly. "I didn't expect my good fortune," he said, "would bring you both such agitation." He stared into her pale, affrighted, working features. On a sudden he dropped the hand, looking with sharp bewilderment at his mother.

"Where is Flora?" he asked. Through his next words rang alarm. "Has anything happened to her? Does it mean that?"

Receiving no answer, he grasped his mother's arm.

"Tell me—tell me!" he demanded. "*Where is Flora?*"

XX.

As if through utter bodily exhaustion, Marion sank at the foot of an arm-chair and buried her face in its cushioned seat. Witnessing this, Roland turned as white as the woman before him.

"What horror have you been hiding?" he gasped. "What has happened? Where is she?"

Mrs. Garretson pointed to Marion's crouched shape. "Oh, my boy, she is there!"

"There?" His confused look seemed to ask if this were madness, since it could not be jest. "There?" he repeated. "Come, now, mother, let us understand one another. I asked you where was Flora."

Between two choked sobs, as it were, Mrs. Garretson said,—

"Flora has been away a long time. She did not love you enough to stay here at your side and share your trouble. And so Marion took her place."

"Marion—took—her—place?"

With a terrible quietude he seated himself at the large, book-laden table (the same table at which he had spent many a pleased if not joyful hour through weeks past), and let his head sink sideways against his clasped hands,—a habit acquired since the coming of his blindness.

"And so you mean," he said, slowly, with an unwonted metallic note in his calm voice, "that I have been victimized by this dreadful deception?"

Mrs. Garretson advanced a few steps nearer to him. But she paused, seeing that Marion had risen. The girl's face was chalky, and from her eyes leaped a wild, diamond light. She went forward also, stopping when she had got farther than Roland's mother.

"You must only blame one of us," she began, "and that one is I. Your mother felt that when Flora deserted you she was losing you forever. She did not do wrong; she saw that you had mistaken me for Flora, here in this very room; she remembered how you yourself had spoken of the strong resemblances between us, notwithstanding the strong differences in coloring and expression. She feared the racking emotional effect upon you of a discovery that Flora had gone away,—

that she had never really cared for you,—that she wanted to marry Lydig Pearsall, and was even then engaged to become his wife. She had spoken with great bitterness to Flora, upbraiding and reproaching my sister in a way foreign to her natural fine self-restraint, a way you would not believe possible unless you had witnessed it, and yet one perhaps excusable because of her adoring motherly love. But my sister too had her excuse. She could not fulfil the new part required of her. She repented having betrothed herself to you, and shrank from a hypocrisy which your affliction made all the more difficult."

Marion paused, but only for a second. It was so evident she was gathering strength for farther speech that Roland's downcast eyes lifted and momentarily swept her face. They did not meet her own look, however. That was drooped, and remained so while she went on speaking. Mrs. Garretson, as if conscious of what she would next say, laid a remonstrating hand on her shoulder. But this action had no deterring effect.

"I alone have been terribly to blame, and now, in these few final sentences,—final because the last I shall ever expect to have you hear from me,—I wish fully to express my recognition of the deceits in which I have dealt. At first I shrank from attempting them; then I yielded, thoroughly aware of my sinfulness. Afterward a glamour of self-vindication seemed to clothe my acts. I resolved upon living with you a life of incessant falsity, and strove to convince my conscience that your greater happiness and peace of mind justified this design. But I have never truly thought this; I have always felt that your contempt lurked like a sheathed knife, ready—"

"Marion!" cried Mrs. Garretson.

"—Like a sheathed knife," the girl relentlessly went on, "ready to flash out on me, as I am but too certain it flashes now."

Here Roland's mother sprang to his chair and knelt beside it. "No, no!" she implored. "However you may be astounded by all this, you must not, you shall not, despise Marion! And it is not true that she is alone to blame! I besought her, I used every kind of supplication to win her over. She refused, and yet I persisted. Out of mercy to me—out of that only—she at last gave in."

Roland was looking down at his mother with a face stern and gloomy, not sullen or indignant, yet somehow stonily hard.

"You can hate me if you will," went on Mrs. Garretson, slowly rising, "but you should forgive her."

A softening light came into Roland's features. "To think of hating you," he said, "would be absurd. I begin to see just why you took the course you did take. And I—I" (his voice thickened, then cleared) "am far from despising . . . Marion. Do I forgive her, also? Why, yes. I hope—to put it rather thinly and dully, though I can't find another form of putting it, just now—that I am a gentleman. As for this despising and this refusing to forgive, I see no need of mentioning, on my own part, any such attitude whatever. The whole matter stretches wider, with me, and drops deeper. I look at it now quite as I feel certain that I must always look at it. But frankness becomes a necessity;" and here his eyes wandered toward Marion, im-

mediately averting themselves. "I—I cannot help saying, mother, that I think Flora's sister was right when she so—so broadly hinted that this would be the last time we should ever meet."

"I promise you that it shall be!" cried Marion, not with the vaguest trace of anger, but with great solemnity and sorrow. And at a speed that was almost headlong she hurried from the library, taking time, and no more, to close the door behind her, with a sort of impetuous carefulness, as though in all the passion of her misery she remembered an avoidance of intemperate abandonment.

Mother and son stared at one another for a moment. As Roland left his seat by the table, Mrs. Garretson went up to the high mantel and laid both arms along its edge in a posture of unrelieved despair.

Roland stood for a long while gazing down at the big table, among whose books and journals and sheets of manuscript he found piercing reminders of the recent past.

"Mother," he at length called.

She did not move her head, both bowed and averted as it was. "Well?" she answered.

"Oh, mother, mother, mother," he sighed, "into what forlorn, unparalleled position have you brought me! This is like waking to a new blindness. I wish Graham had never come, for then the illusion might have died only with my death. But now—good God, I have simply to remember in order to realize that Marion loves me,—that she must love me. And yet, seeing her, the whole fabric of sentiment falls—perishes. But with Flora my love lives on, spite of her unfaithfulness, her desertion. Never, never, I believe, in all the history of human life, has there occurred so strangely unhappy an event. The more I think of it the more it stuns and crushes me."

He began to pace the floor, his bent visage a very study of suffering. His mother left her place by the mantel and came forward, watching him with woebegone looks.

"Roland, it's all unparalleled, as you say. It never happened before. There's no precedent whatever for any course of action. My remorse has no emotional ancestry, so to speak; neither has your sense of ill usage, nor poor Marion's dismay. You bade her go, but she had planned going already."

Roland wheeled himself round, with a strident, querulous laugh,—the first touch of ill nature he had yet shown,—and even this partaking more of grief than ire.

"In heaven's name don't persuade the girl to stay," he said.

"I couldn't, Roland. No earthly power could—except yours."

"Mine? *mine!*" He laughed again, this time as though with desolate self-distrust. "Mother," he went on, the words an odd comminglement of fierceness and sorrow, "do you know that if Heath's cure had come later—say in Berlin, after our marriage—I can imagine this return of sight making me want to kill her!"

"To kill her! Roland! She loves you,—she adores you. If this had not been true, even my passionate persuasions could not have won her over. Kill her for having sought to bless and heal your life with her beautiful love! Oh, barbarous, horrible!"

Roland started ; then the grimmest and most caustic of smiles crept between his lips. "No," he said, "I'm not coward enough for that, thank God ! I should doubtless merely have killed myself."

XXI.

The absent Mrs. Kirkland's house in Ninth Street was very lonely, with most of its furniture shrouded and most of its rooms darkened. But Marion, who had been there three days, did not mind the loneliness. An elderly housekeeper and two or three servants had received her very kindly. She took occasional walks in the neighboring streets, where dwelling after dwelling had the same shut-up look as her aunt's, and she spent a good many hours among the ill-assorted books of a library which seemed to typify what she had already heard concerning the indolent and frivolous nature of their possessor. But she read nothing thoroughly, and often sat for a longer time than she knew, staring at the opposite bookcases with an opened volume in her lap.

The future looked bafflingly blank ; the present was one prolonged, living shock. That it all had come to so lamentably lame an end kept the thrills of consternation still vibrating through her spirit. She had not thought Roland's answer cruel. On the contrary, there had been to her something chivalrously characteristic about his whole bearing. How many an ordinary man would simply have raved and stormed, and said a few brutal things, and flung himself from the room ! But he had been so high-bred through it all. And yet he must have suffered so fearfully!—he must be suffering so fearfully now !

She hoped they would soon go to Europe, he and his mother. *That* part of Mrs. Garretson's plans certainly need not be altered. And to him—now that he saw again—the change would ultimately prove inestimable. She hoped they would go, because she felt that the day of their sailing would put some new clarity and definiteness into her own blurred thoughts and wavering purposes. She was now not merely without hope of ever again meeting him on past terms. It was quite another kind of pain to face : it was recognizing her incapability of becoming to him as lately she had been. His potential willingness or unwillingness had no concern in the affair at all. If he had knelt at her feet and prayed to her, "Marion, let us try and look upon our love precisely as upon something which circumstance has not in the least either lessened or enlarged," she would have answered him, "I thank you, Roland, but—impossible!" If he had said to her, "Marion, I love you absolutely the same as when you were my secretary and read to me and drove and strolled with me and led me about the house," she would have answered, "This may be true, and I am grateful to you for having told me of it. But the new days can never be the old days, and it is much better that those of our future should always lie apart."

She could not explain this feeling. She only knew that it unalterably existed. She had wanted his forgiveness, and it would be sweet to think that he loved her as he had declared so many a time while be-

lieving her to be Flora. But to marry him now!—there seemed a hundred bolted doors between herself and such an event. In a vague way she could best make the repugnance plain to her mind through a sense of irreparable mortification. Her woman's modesty had been dealt, by the utterly unforeseen event of his recovery, a wound for which time held no cure. To take her sister's place like that had sharply hurt; to be found out in having taken it—to feel the mask torn away—was like some ruthless exposure of physical nakedness. Formerly there had been excuse for self-surrender. Now fate had turned that self-surrender into an unforgettable self-contempt. She could never look Roland in the eyes—the *seeing eyes*—hereafter, without having the sensation of two dagger-thrusts in the gaze he gave her back. Once the palliative of helping him, of lifting his moods from depths black as his own blindness, had nerved and buoyed her. It had seemed a Samaritan task, and latterly she had gone on performing it with a kind of silent exultation in its holiness. Now the whole view of it wore coarse tints of the vulgarest comedy, and she could almost hear, at times, the sarcastic comments which knowledge of it would have evoked from pitiless worldly critics.

On the day of her swift and almost secret departure from Widewood she had avoided any meeting with Graham Heath. But to her great surprise he appeared at the Ninth Street house on the fourth morning after she had arrived in town. Only a little while before she had received a letter from Mrs. Garretson, full of regrets and sympathies,—a sort of sorrowful reverie thrown into epistolary form. It had mentioned Roland as being reticent and sombre and greeting with a cheerfulness that struck her as artifice itself those who came to pay him felicitations. But she had not written a line about Heath's probable visit, for which on this account Marion was all the more ill prepared.

If his coming had not piqued her curiosity she would not have received him at all. As it was, she went down-stairs feeling that he had learned the whole matter, and throbbing with harried pride. His very kindness of demeanor stung her more. For quite a while she scarcely knew what words left her lips while they sat together on one of the sheeted lounges, with other pieces of sheeted furniture planted like ghostly listeners about the dim, stale-smelling room. While fixing his eyes on one of these pale objects, he said,—

“Your aunt has still not arrived?”

“No. She may appear, now, at almost any time. . . You are in town from Widewood only for a day, I suppose?”

“Yes; I am going back this afternoon.”

“To remain long?”

“Till next Thursday. Then I shall perhaps travel a little about my long-neglected country. But I shall hate to leave *him*.”

The last sentence was full of soft abruptness. “Roland?” she said, almost involuntarily, while her color rose.

“Yes. He is very miserable,—in spirits, I mean, not in health.”

Marion gave a slight nod, but did not answer.

He smoothed his chin with one hand, as if in rumination. Then he said suddenly, though with much gentleness,—

"I fancy you must guess that I know all about it by this time."

"From whom?" she asked, looking into her lap. "From him, or Mrs. Garretson?"

"From both. Of course I was told in utter confidence. But that was wholly needless, as I am sure they both have reason to know. And now," he added, leaning nearer to her, with tones that mellowed richly, "let me assure you how sweet and brave and splendid has been your entire course. I applaud it, I honor it, from my soul! Deceit is only an idle, superficial name for it. It was charity, of the purest and noblest. Of course you could not have attempted it if you had not cared for him—"

Here she made a faint, repelling gesture, and he instantly went on,—

"But I shall not presume to do more than touch on that. It is, indeed, only as Roland's friend that I presume to address you at all,—to beg of you the favor which brings me here."

"What favor?" she said, now for the first time lifting her eyes to his face.

"That you will let him come with me here some day quite soon."

"No," she said, with prompt firmness.

"No? Really you refuse?"

"Really. It could do no good,—no possible good. Is—" she fingered the front of her gown for a second—"is this his idea or yours?"

"He has no ideas on the subject, apparently."

"He had one definite one when I last saw him." She raised a finger here. "Don't think that I speak in the faintest way resentfully. But he made it most clear that it was best for us never to meet again. And he was right."

Something in those final words brought a start and a stare from Heath.

"Yes, right," Marion hastened on, "and my consent to this interview you suggest would be the sorriest of follies. Let me tell you why, Dr. Heath; let me tell you why." And then she spoke for a long time, her accents here and there faltering, her speech at times flurried and plaintive, but her meaning always evident, like a light now shining in a wind, now glimmering through haze. "And it is this way with me, Dr. Heath," she ended, "and it can never possibly be any other. You might bring Roland here, and we might spend two or three hours together, and he might even ask me to be his wife. But it would all make no difference,—none, none!"

She looked straight into Heath's eyes now, and her own were streaming with tears. "Even if by any chance it might happen that he wanted very much to see me again, I pray of you to dissuade him from doing so. I would not, could not refuse, because I love him—"

"You love him?" came with a soft kind of shout from Heath. "You admit that, and yet tell me you and he must remain eternally divided!"

"I love him," she repeated, with a sweet yet poignant earnestness, "and I shall never love any other man while I live. Ah, I see you say, with your wise smile, that I am young and do not know my own

heart. But I know that heart is given to him, in one sense, forever. And yet I also know that the thought of marrying him (for I am sure you mean, in your kindness, to try and bring about such a result—pray correct me if I err) is one remote from every effort I could possibly summon. What has happened with him and me is like some island separated by a rough ocean from all land for many miles. Dreams and memories may return there, for these are airy travellers, and defy all distance, all savagery of voyage. I think I need not show you any farther how impossible is the change you suggest. My attitude toward him was—what it was. It cannot be twisted and contorted into a new, artificial shape. My sister Flora is lost to him, but no more irretrievably, if he should so desire, than am I. Hereafter, if he chooses to marry, he may find some woman worthy of his noble character and brilliant mind. The man he is now—the man whom your science and skill have remade him—I should hold myself degraded, soiled, coarsely humiliated, if I accepted as a husband!"

Marion rose. She was trembling, but tried to hide it. She put out her hand to Heath. "Give Cousin Eleanor my love," she said, "and beg her to take Roland to Europe soon, as she had arranged."

Heath, on his feet in a trice, clasped her hand. "Oh, this is all so strange!" he cried. "A girl of your years! And I feel that you have spiritually captured, enthralled him—"

"Stop!" she prayed, equally with voice and eyes.

"I feel," he persisted, "that his present silence and moody gloom are only tokens in him of a slow-growing realization. He is gradually understanding that destiny, providence, has given to him a glorious chance of splendid future achievement. His mother has made me certain of how pitiable a misalliance would have been his marriage with your sister. She has told me of your rich aid to him in this last unfinished work. He is gradually—oh, I am confident of it!—comprehending that you are the love of his spirit,—that Flora could never have been that, with all her beauty and grace and fascination. Remember, I knew him long ago, and gauged his character thoroughly. This knowledge, born of past friendship, convinces me that every sensuous influence is dropping away from his curiously, intricately tormented passion. Flora is dying in his heart, brain, life. You, Marion,—pardon my calling you Marion,—are beginning to shine out there, steadfast as a star."

"So may I shine forever," she said, very feebly, but with untold negation and refusal in her look. She appeared, the next few seconds, almost in straits for breath. "As a remembrance, I mean," she went on; "Heaven knows I've not the egotism to hint more. If he should ask—if you and he should speak of this meeting, tell him I—I was not unkind; tell him—only—that I—that I could not fill his future,—that what he has become I could never accompany, never dignifiedly keep pace with,—that all of a woman's womanliness I threw away in striving to help him and be to him the very sight he had lost, all this has now become like a mocking taunt to me. Tell him this if you must, my friend, but only if you must. . . . There, now, good-by—good-by, and thanks—thanks."

She left him, hurrying away after a quick, stringent pressure of his hand.

And he, pierced by the vision of her tear-stained face and the vanishing pathos of her hopeless yet resolute smile, mused half aloud, in the queerly spectral room where she had left him,—

“It’s true. She is right. She cannot. And I, with my science and its sparkling success, I’ve turned out an interloper and a mar-all! Intent on giving back Roland a priceless blessing, I’ve given it back tinged with sorrow that threatens almost to become a curse.”

XXII.

“I’m glad, after all, that I saw him,” thought Marion, an hour or so later, when calm had come back to her, and with it a lucid review of just what she had said to Graham.

Then pangs of regret assailed her because of her discourteous exit, born of unnerving agitation though it had been. She wrote Heath a long note, profuse in apologies, and felt better after she had had it sent to the mail.

All the rest of that day she was troubled by self-questionings as to how she should account for her presence here in the house of her aunt, whose home-coming might now be very near. These anxieties, mingling with others, gave her almost a sleepless night, and she rose with slight appreciation of the beautiful, breezy morning which beamed over New York, as so often happens in early autumn. Our English cousins have their unrivalled spring and even their salubrious July. We, as a rule, have neither, but, for all the occasional heat of our latter Augests and our entire Septembers, we begin at these times to count on the visitations of just such perfect days as now set the great trees in Washington Square glistening and nodding, and stole little blithesome sparks from the gray castellated stone of the University building, then still unreplaced by the hideous commercial structure that stands where it once loomed baronial and picturesque.

Marion went out for a stroll, however, and soon felt the delicious spells of the morning. The long row of marble-and-brick houses on the north side of the Square looked gladsomely pink-and-white, notwithstanding their tenants’ obvious absence, and while she walked southward below twinkling and rustling boughs the faces of certain tramps on the benches appealed to her as wearing below their dirt a distinct gratitude at the change from torrid rigors to salubrious relents. What a gloriously lovely day, she thought, it must be at Widewood! How the maples and elms and chestnuts and hickories must be talking melodiously together beneath a sky full of cool, rounded, flocculent clouds! And she would never see it all again. Time, the stern scene-shifter, had pushed all its fair pictures away unreturningly from the stage of her life. And it was yet such a young life! What other scenes would slide into its grooves? Perhaps only one or two, and those rather sad gray things, at best; for she would now have

none of society, of "coming out," though the heavens fell. And that she would never marry any man on earth was certain to her as that the sun shone.

Then she fell to thinking of Flora, and saying that she had best write her sister a letter laying everything bare. She did not feel like the task; she would far rather have stayed for some time longer out here amid the shine and murmur of the morning. She slowly passed up through University Place and mounted the granite stoop of her aunt's antique house, where a copious wistaria overflowed the rusty balcony and slanted one of its long ropy braids across a side of the heavy granite portico before clambering past upper windows sheer to the roof. She rang the door-bell somewhat languidly. Then she turned and looked forth upon the street again, where vehicles were clattering.

"Marion," came a voice above the din. She turned. Mrs. Garretson stood in the doorway, with her hand on the knob.

"Cousin Eleanor!" she said, in great amazement.

When they had got into the drawing-room, and stood there, holding one another's hands and searching one another's faces, Marion said, with a little weary note of suspicion striking through the geniality of her welcome,—

"Why didn't you write or telegraph me that you were coming to town? You must have taken quite an early train."

"I did."

"Some . . . shopping expedition, I suppose."

"No, no."

Marion's face fell. "You're not here because of Dr. Heath's visit yesterday?"

"My coming has nothing to do with his,—nothing whatever."

"Ah, my dear friend," sped Marion's answer, "you look terribly worn and tired."

"I've reason—I've reason!" For a moment it seemed as if Roland's mother would break into a torrent of tears. She shut her eyes tight, and the muscles of her throat, just below the chin, showed a spasm or two of piteous contraction. "I will *not* give way," her hoarse voice soon managed. "I've too much to tell you, my dear." And then she spoke on and on, catching her breath excitedly at intervals, while Marion drew her to the same lounge which she and Heath so lately had occupied, and used little calming gestures, pats upon hands, breast, temples, and brow.

When her words ended Marion made no answer, but rose from the lounge and began to move about the room, very pale, with a dreamy, burning look in her set eyes.

"Have you no reply to give me?" Mrs. Garretson at length broke out.

Marion stood still, gazing across the room at her eager, harassed face.

"You say that he said, Cousin Eleanor——?"

"He said just what I have told you."

Marion suddenly glided to the speaker and put both arms about

her neck. "It is so strange! I never dreamed of looking on him again. I—I prayed that we should not meet, because it would be of no use,—no earthly use. And yet now—why, now, in a trice, as it were, all is changed. Yes, Cousin Eleanor, I will go with you to Widewood,—I will go by the first train that can take us there."

About two hours later Marion and Mrs. Garretson alighted from a stage-coach at the familiar Widewood portals. Before they had more than gained the inner hall, Graham Heath met them.

"Where is he?" asked Roland's mother.

"In the library," said Heath, with a peculiar look at Marion.

"Waiting?" said Mrs. Garretson, while she crushed down a sob.

"Hoping," answered Heath, his look still on Marion.

"You see, I've brought her, Graham. I am so tired, so fagged out! I must go up-stairs to my rooms. But I leave her in your hands. Come to me if you have good news; pray, do not forget me!" And Mrs. Garretson, with a wan yet glad smile, and a nod as of joyful thanks, both meant for Marion, disappeared.

"You've heard everything, of course?" Heath said.

"Everything," the girl answered. "What a blow for you!"

"Professionally, yes. In the way of friendship, even worse. I had not been back from town more than an hour, you know. We were walking arm in arm on the lawn. I had noticed that he seemed specially dispirited and taciturn. I had not told him of my visit to you; I forgot what commonplaces we were exchanging. Suddenly he stopped, drew his arm from mine, and raised a hand to his eyes. 'My God, Graham,' he said, 'everything has grown dim again. It's just as it was when I found my sight returning!' He did not speak in any affright or horror. After we had got into the house he seemed to grow calmer and calmer. I sat by him and held his hand, after making certain brief examinations. I knew that the world was gradually fading from him—and forever."

"Forever?" repeated Marion.

"Yes. By night his night had come,—one that could have no earthly morning. I realized then that I had arrived too late. The wonderful cure had done its best, but hard odds had been against it. Those lost weeks, during which I had lain ill at Berlin, were time fatally wasted."

"But the cure might be tried again," urged Marion. "Why not? He is so strong and brave; he could certainly bear another trial."

"He could never bear another trial," said Heath, with intense decision. "I am certain that Dr. Gottlieb would agree with me. The optic nerve is dead. To put him through another such course of electric treatment would result either in cerebral paralysis, which means death, or insanity, which means worse. At least, I think it means worse: do not you?"

"Yes, yes! But either is so horrible to think of!" She let her hand fall on Heath's wrist, her fingers tightening about it. "When the total darkness came, he was still very placid, very uncomplaining, his mother said."

"Yes. She and I sat up with him nearly all the night. He could not sleep,—naturally,—and the sedatives I gave him had no effect. But at last, toward morning, he fell into a series of fitful dozes. Through the day he has slept a little, now and then, in his big chair in the library, where he insisted on being taken. . . Mrs. Garrison told you of how he kept constantly referring to you,—of all the tender, pathetic, self-accusing things he said about you?"

"I—I heard—yes."

"But the most heart-breaking thing was the way he kept reaching out one hand toward a vacant chair not far away from him. Then, as if remembering, he would draw the hand back again, and sigh, oh, with such pitiful heaviness! . . 'She will never come to me now,' he said, once, with an infinite melancholy. 'No one must ever ask her to come, for I repulsed her of my own free will,—I bade her to go. And she is a great-hearted, great-souled creature, and though perhaps if she hears of this new evil thing her generosity may make her come just once again, of her own accord, still, I would not have her summoned. No, no, I would not have her summoned, for I have forfeited all right to take this course.'"

"He has forfeited no such right," murmured Marion. "That is why, Dr. Heath, I came back to Widewood, after all." Then she glanced toward the distant door of the library. "You—you said he was in there, waiting?"

"Hoping. A few hours ago I told him his mother had gone for you."

"That—pleased—him?"

"Ever since then he has been in a tremor of expectation. He made me find him the manuscript of his unfinished novel, and for a long time he has sat fumbling it in a fond way, and passing his hands over your writing on page after page."

Marion's clasp fell from Heath's wrist. "Do you recollect all that I said to you only yesterday?" she asked.

"Perfectly. Why not?"

"And yet I'm here. Do you understand why?"

"Because you love him?" was Heath's questioning response.

"Oh, I have loved him all along. No; it is because he needs me."

"And—pardon me—would you marry him now?"

"He has not asked me,—that is, not since he knew that I am—myself."

"But he has said to me," Heath brought out explosively, and with moistening eyes, "that if now he had to live without you he would not and could not live another year!"

Marion turned away, slowly unbuttoning the light jacket she wore and casting it on a chair. Heath stood perfectly still, watching her. As she quietly moved past him, he said, in beseeching voice,—

"You won't forget his suspense; you'll let me tell him you're here?"

Her eyes were tearful, but from her lips a sweetly imperative smile had broken.

"I can announce myself, if you please."

"God bless you!" said Heath; and, stooping, he covered one of her hands with kisses.

Marion went to the door of the library, stood there for a moment as if steadyng herself, and then quietly entered. With scarcely a sound, she shut the door behind her.

The same dear old room, with its dark wainscotings, its drooped and draping tapestries, its low rows of well-filled walnut book-shelves, its groined ceiling, its two broad mullioned windows, pushed open, so that the summer sunshine could slant in and spot brilliantly the big Persian rugs on the polished oaken floor. And that figure seated near the long wide table, with its delicate dark head silhouetted against the rear light,—how piercingly familiar it all looked!

"Heath, is that you?"

She did not answer, coming softly forward.

"Heath, has mother got back yet? I—I don't suppose she has brought *her*. I never felt, you know, that she would come."

Here Roland rose. He held in both hands a few leaves of the manuscript over which so many entrancing days had been passed by Marion,—days when the strokes of her pen, now quick and now pauseful, had been wrought in obedience to this same full-volumed voice.

The chair—the empty chair, in which she had so often sat, held its accustomed place. Toward this she glided, passing round the side of the table farthest from Roland.

But his strained ear caught the almost inaudible rustle of her garments. A sudden smile of profound sadness lit his lips.

"It is not Graham!" he said, drearily. "It's you, mother; you've come to tell me that you could not bring her back. Mother, dear old mammy, don't feel so grieved that you can't speak and tell me she would not come." He straightened his form and threw back his handsome head, with a terrible pathos of dignity and self-assertion. "And who can blame her? Mother, she has been right. Remember how I said to her that she was right in suggesting, hinting (what was the word I used?) that we should never meet again. No, no, mother, I will not have you blame her. She loved me, and she showed her love with a splendid hypocrisy, a divine deceit! All this is now clear to me; it came before the new darkness came, though bewilderment and a strange, feverish, acrimonious pride racked me and wrestled with me. But the new darkness, that must last till I die, has quelled all that. She did what only one woman in many thousands would do, and she is dearer to me than even my lost sight. I stand here, mother, wishing I had never known the truth, never had had that short glimpse of the old healthful life! For even that would have been joyless without her, and some day, mother, I—I will send her a letter, telling her this, and you shall write it for me. I—I will begin it 'My Wife that Might have Been.' Ah, but that's a trifle tawdry and vapid, is it not? We'd have laughed at it, she and I, if it had crept into our writing. Our writing! My God!"

He let the loose sheets fall from his fingers, and suddenly, with the

sidelong head and creased brow of the blind when perplexed, or alarmed, he cried sharply, almost irascibly,—

“Mother! Is it you? Why don’t you speak to me?”

“Roland.”

She was quite close to him; her voice told him that. He reached both hands forward. You might have thought him, for a moment, some blind sculptor, outlining with swift finger-sweeps the arms, shoulders, throat, features, temples, tresses, of some beloved statue, stolen but now restored.

Yet ah, the impotent and ill-chosen metaphor! For soon his arms clasped no statue, but a living, loving, pardoning, boundlessly pitying woman.

THE END.

BIRD ARTISTS.

THAT there is a consciousness of beauty on the part of birds is plainly shown by the manner in which many of them decorate their nests and surroundings, and, in some instances, themselves. Perhaps it may not be too much to claim that all birds are moved by an artistic sentiment, and that, while most of them are artistic in effect, many are artistic in both intention and effect. The appreciation of what is beautiful is a distinctly marked characteristic of most members of the feathered family, and it is only natural that the desire and ability to create beauty are found in various degrees of development among them. It is only a step from desire of beauty to an effort to produce it; but the effort and accomplishment occasionally bring about strange results, in birds as well as in man.

Striking examples of this bizarre form of decoration are found in the motmot, which disfigures its long tail-feathers in an effort at improvement, and in the hammer-head and gardener-bird, which delight in surrounding their homes with all sorts of bright-colored shells, pebbles, and feathers.

Sometimes the exhibition of artistic feeling is carried so far as to confound belief. Were it not for the corroborative testimony of scientific travellers, we might well doubt the tales that come to us of the baya of Farther India, of the gardener-bird, the collar-bird, and the half-dozen other birds whose strangely developed decorative instincts command our admiration and wonder.

The baya is one of the weaver-birds, whose peculiarity is that they build their nests by skilfully weaving into the desired shapes long strips of grass or other material. The nest is a beautiful and ingenious piece of work, and is as compact as felt, with a long rope-like neck which is attached to the limb by a skilful knot, and with entrance and exit by two holes in the bottom. The bird is very sociable, and in Burmah delights to build under the eaves of human habitations, where it is rarely disturbed. Often as many as thirty or forty of the curious, bottle-shaped nests may be seen hanging about one house and swaying gently to and fro in the breeze.

These nests are ingeniously planned, the upper portion being divided into two chambers, one for Mother Baya while she is sitting, and the other for Father Baya when he finds time for rest, while below is a large general living-room for the whole family as soon as the young Bayas grow strong enough to leave the upper chamber.

But the baya does not stop here. Now that creature comforts are provided, there is leisure to gratify his sense of the beautiful. Hardly has Mother Baya settled down when her husband, having put the finishing touches to the nest, hurries away in search of fresh lumps of clay, which he affixes to the inner walls of the nest. Then off again, before the clay has time to harden, to capture one of the fireflies of which there are myriads in the tropics. The living lamp is secured to

the lump of clay, and lights up the little chamber with its phosphorescent glow. Then another and another are captured and fastened to the walls, until the patient little mother has light enough to cheer her during the long, dark night. After that more of the animated diamonds are fastened to the exterior, there to glitter and flash for the delectation of the outside world.

What a picture it is for the imagination, the quaint little hut with overhanging eaves nestling in the gloom of a tangled tropical forest, and with the gayly illuminated bird-nest lanterns shedding their soft phosphorescent light through the semi-darkness! However wretched and poor the little cottage may be, for the time being it loses its squalidness and is transformed into a fairy palace.

But even more wonderful are the miniature house and grounds of the gardener-bird, hidden away in the depths of some forest in far-away Papua. In this case the architectural and artistic genius of the bird is not expended upon the nest itself, which is a very commonplace affair, but finds scope elsewhere. One traveller, who had discredited the stories of the natives regarding the bird, gave the matter the most rigid and careful investigation, and as a result declared the work of the gardener-bird to be one of the most extraordinary facts in natural history.

According to this naturalist, De Bessari, the bird-artist selects a level spot on which is growing a shrub with a stalk about the thickness of a walking-cane. This is made the central pillar of the edifice, and serves, at about two feet from the ground, to fasten the framework of the roof to. It is held firmly in place by an embankment of moss built up around the root. After the framework is formed, other stems are woven in and out until a water-proof roof is made. Then a gallery is constructed, running around the interior of the edifice. When completed the whole structure is three feet or more in diameter at the base, is tent-shaped, and has a large arched opening for a doorway.

Around the house are artistically arranged grounds, made green and lawn-like by being covered with patches of moss brought hither for the purpose. Bright-colored flowers and fruits and fungi are disposed about the premises; and even brilliant-hued insects are captured and placed here and there on the grounds to add to their attractiveness. The inner gallery of the house is also decorated with these bright objects, which are removed and replaced as they fade. Moreover, and with evident design, the material of which the house is built is a species of orchid which retains its freshness for a very long time.

And all this elaborate work and skill is for the purpose of having a common meeting-place for social intercourse. The nest itself of the sober-colored little bird is placed at a distance from the highly decorated public house and grounds, and, as already stated, is a very commonplace affair.

Almost incredible as these feats are, however, there are bower-birds in Australia which are but little behind the gardener-bird in architectural ability and decorative sentiment. The plan of work varies a little in different varieties, but all of them have one trait in common, the building of pleasure houses and grounds and the decorating of them

with miscellaneous ornamental objects. All these birds are small, the gardener being scarcely as large as our robins, while his near relative the bower-bird is about the size of a pigeon.

The spotted collar-bird derives its name from a collar of long feathers about its neck, and is generally regarded as the most expert and aesthetic of the bower-builders.

As in the case of the gardener, the nest of the bower-bird is a very ordinary affair, all his skill and care being given to build and adorn the bower where he and his fellows may disport themselves. This edifice is made by building a platform of woven twigs about three feet long and two feet wide, along the sides of which are planted twigs held in place by being stuck into the earth and by stones laid against them. These twigs are brought together at the top, and other twigs are interwoven to give additional strength and imperviousness to rain. This completed, the interior of the bower is lined with a species of tall, soft grass so disposed that the heads almost meet at the roof. Stones of quite large size are so arranged as to keep the grass in position, and care is taken that no projecting spur of the twigs employed in building shall turn inward and thus make it possible for a careless reveller to injure his feathers.

The bower completed, the architects turn their attention to ornamentation, and the country for miles around is searched for such small objects as are pure white or brilliantly colored. Shells, feathers, pebbles, agates, seeds, bleached bones, and in fact anything decorative, even skulls, are brought and placed, not at hap-hazard, but in a systematic way which can indicate only intelligent forethought. Even pathways are marked out at each end of the bower by means of pebbles, while little ornamental hillocks are erected in front of each entrance. And then, after everything is completed, there is a grand festive gathering of the builders, during which the assembly-rooms are thrown open to the public. The males are said to strut about and exhibit their fine feathers and graceful carriage, while the females look on in rapt admiration.

In some of the species, as the peacock, bird of paradise, and lyre-bird, this love for the beautiful shows itself in an exaggerated form of vanity, and is plainly founded on an appreciation of the beauty of their own plumage, for they not only take the utmost care to keep their feathers free from blemish, but evince a positive delight in their own beauty, now lifting their gorgeous feathers in a sort of silent ecstasy, and now strutting up and down with uncontrollable pride. But in the case of the gardener and bower-birds the motive in collecting the various decorative objects is plainly born of a desire to gratify a love of the beautiful, and not to minister to personal vanity; and the wholly festive nature of the structure is also a proof of the absence of any idea of utility in the impulse.

Another remarkable architect and decorator is the hammer-head of Africa, which selects a sloping piece of ground as a foundation and on it erects a dome-shaped edifice of mud and twigs which sometimes covers an area of nearly fifty square feet. This is a very large dwelling for a bird only twenty inches in length, but the hammer-head has

ideas of comfort and luxury that are far in advance of many of the native human denizens of Central Africa.

A level platform of wood is built at the higher end of the structure, and on this a carpet of some soft vegetable material is laid. A partition-wall with a doorway is then raised to cut this portion off from the main room, for this is the mother's chamber and the nursery. Another part of the dwelling is then partitioned off for use as a store-room, and it is the male bird's duty to stock it with provisions against a bad season. The rest of the space in the house is retained by the male bird as a sort of guard-house and resting-place combined. The doorway to this dwelling is placed on the lower part of the slope, in order that rain may not cause an inundation of the habitation.

The hammer-head has peculiar ideas of decoration, and evidently prefers quantity to quality, for bits of bright-colored glass, buttons, bleached bones, knives, broken crockery, seeds, and all such objects are sought for with equal eagerness. Anything which glitters and is portable is eligible to his art museum, and he has no qualms of conscience about appropriating whatever pleases his fancy. This free-booting is so well known that the natives upon losing any glittering object will at once make a visit to the nest of a hammer-head and overhaul its art treasures.

After everything has been done to the satisfaction of the female bird,—for among the hammer-heads the female is the architect and master-mechanic, while the male is only a journeyman builder,—the male bird divides his time between finding food and seeking objects wherewith to decorate the exterior of his mansion.

The motmot of South America is endowed with more than an ordinary degree of beauty, but in seeking to enhance its attractiveness succeeds in paralleling some of the most absurd of humanity's decorative freaks. The color of the bird is green, with a sable tuft edged with blue adorning its breast, and a blue-edged triangle surrounding the eye and extending to the ear. The tail is very long and graceful, and there is a crest upon its head which can be erected at will. But the motmot is not satisfied with this lavish endowment of nature, and essays an improvement. The two middle tail-feathers are very long and conspicuous, and, selecting these as the objects of its decorative design, the motmot cuts away with its serrated bill about an inch of the web on each side of the shafts, near the tips of the feathers. This gives them the appearance of miniature lawn-tennis bats. Nor is the work done in a mechanical or instinctive way, for often a too anxious fledgling will begin the attempt at decoration too soon, before its tail has reached full growth, or will clip away on the wrong feather, thus disfiguring itself even in motmot estimation.

Pewees, oven-birds, and many other species may be said to decorate their nests more as an effort at concealment than with an eye to beauty; but the humming-bird must be credited with some design for artistic effect when it so tastefully binds bits of moss or lichen to its tiny nest by means of spider-web silk. And the same plea may be urged for the pretty little Syrian nuthatch, which beautifies the outside of its clay nest with the iridescent gossamer wings of various insects; and

perhaps for the dwarf swift of Africa, which gums her little ones to the palm-leaf on which her nest is built, and there lets the living jewels flutter and chirp while the breeze tosses about the unsteady home. But in the last instance it is more the little one's safety than an attempt at decoration which actuates the mother-bird.

A more familiar instance of decorative design is found in our Baltimore oriole,—which, by the way, derives its name from wearing the colors of Lord Baltimore, black and yellow, and not because of its partiality for the vicinity of the city of Baltimore, as many suppose. Usually this oriole, or starling, as it should be called, finds the materials for its nest in such bits of thread or fibre as can be found in the fields; but not infrequently it visits the human habitations in the vicinity and steals from them any material which may be exposed and which pleases its fancy. When the choice is given, it invariably selects the brightest and most gayly colored materials for its nest, passing by more serviceable stuff. This tendency of the bird has been experimented with by giving it the choice of a great variety of gayly colored bits of string, and the resulting nests were as beautiful as human skill could possibly have made them. Indeed, the expertness and ingenuity of the bird in interweaving its materials are such that, according to the naturalist Wilson, one old lady, to whom he showed a nest, seriously proposed having the bird taught to darn stockings.

A similar tendency to use gayly colored materials is exhibited by the crimson-beaked weaver-birds of Africa, which in confinement are a source of interest to their captors from the beautiful nests they build, or weave, from bits of colored yarn and worsted combined with feathers in a most artistic manner. A bird of our own continent, the white-eyed flycatcher, shows a marked partiality for newspapers as building material. As it selects the smilax for a building-place, the combination of nest and site constitutes a very picturesque home.

These facts, which are only examples of many others, go to show that many acts of birds which have been ascribed to chance, or to some particular phase of instinct, as that of concealment, are really dictated, if by nothing more, at least by a self-conscious love of the beautiful. That there is more than chance in the selection of certain trees by certain birds is evidenced by the fact that there are usually plenty of other trees equally available for all practical purposes, but lacking in beauty, near at hand. The yellow-throated sericornis of Australia is an example of this studied selection of a spot for a nest. Whenever possible, it chooses a mass of moss pendent from a tree-branch in which to build, and, thus picturesquely hung, the nests swing about in the breeze, and the little ones are, as it were, born in mid-air. No less interesting are the curious shapes in which the nests are built. Here is a perfect wineglass, there a goblet; indeed, almost every conceivable form which can be bounded by a curve is constructed, the taste and skill alone of the individual builder seeming to govern the fashion. And, instinctive or not, as the case may be, harmony in color between the materials of the nest and its surroundings cannot be laid entirely to the effort at concealment, for often the nests will be most fearlessly exposed.

The best builders are invariably those which, not resting contented with a mere shelter, however elaborately or ingeniously constructed, seek by various means to beautify their homes. Sometimes superfluous additions, purely decorative in their character, are made to the home; sometimes the effect of embellishment is produced by the selection of such materials as in themselves or in combination will please the eye, care being always taken not to sacrifice utility to appearance, therein providing man with a valuable example; and then, again, sometimes—and this is the very acme of art among birds—purely ornamental and decorative structures are made, the sole purpose of which is to afford the builders and their friends pleasant meeting-places.

As a rule, it is only among the pretty-plumaged or sweet-voiced birds that the most fully developed decorative sentiment is found. The outlaws and robbers of the bird-world, like the same classes among men, either build not at all or confine their efforts to the least that can safely be done, wasting no time on decoration. So, too, with those expatriated birds who, having been driven from their own kind, pass their lives upon the water, contenting themselves with a bare rock or a convenient sand-hole.

Frank H. Sweet.

ARE YOU GOING TO COLLEGE?

YOU are now on the home-stretch of the last lap of your school course. When you have reached the goal and commencement exercises are over, will your formal education be at an end? I say *formal*, since every intelligent and active person is constantly adding to an education, whatever his life-work may be. To those who have already decided on a college course I have little to offer beyond congratulations and, possibly, some hints that may prove useful later. Those who are forbidden a college education by bad health, lack of means, or the need of caring for some dear relative may comfort themselves with the thought that home study and attendance on literary clubs and lecture courses may form a fairly satisfactory substitute for college training, at least apparently, since history and literature are the only branches of a liberal education that are exhibited in social intercourse. In no case is an education, gained by questionable means, or by demanding undue sacrifices of one's family, worth what it has cost. What I have to say is intended especially for those who can have a college education for the asking or by putting forth a reasonable effort, but who fear that the four years' additional study is a waste of time.

It is right, because it is necessary, that most persons should consider this, as all other important steps in life, from a business standpoint. Only a few are so unfortunate as to be able to plan without regard to the blessed necessity of earning a living, and still fewer are so lacking in ambition as to have no desire for ultimate prosperity. From all sides you can hear the cry, "What's the use of a college education? Shall I be richer or more successful for it?" In answer I would say that if a young man comes from college and announces to

the world by his manner and almost by his words, "There is my diploma; bring on my laurel wreaths and my ten thousand dollars a year," the probability is that he will receive neither. Going to college is very much like going to Europe or to the World's Fair, or enjoying any other opportunity. The man who relies on one achievement to carry him through the world without further effort is doomed to disappointment. On the other hand, the college graduate who asks no odds of his business associates, and who uses the information and the brain-power which he enjoys as he would employ any other advantage, need fear none of the old prejudice, and may even expect some preferment simply because he has a liberal education.

If we suppose two boys of equal ability to graduate from the high school at eighteen, A going immediately into business and B following him after a college course, it seems at first thought that A has a long start toward success and that B can scarcely overtake him. In business or professional life, however, one does not pass from grade to grade as at school, but spends most of the time in repeating the same task. Thus in six months B will have gained practically the same knowledge of business methods that A has learned in four years. We must also remember that, unfair as it may seem, a young man's pay is rather according to age than ability, so that B will probably receive a higher salary for doing the same work that A did four years before. Considering also the better equipment of the late-comer, it is altogether likely that by the time the young men are twenty-six or twenty-eight, B will have passed his companion, in spite of the handicap of four years.

We frequently hear it said by men who look very wise that "the main benefit of college life is not what one gains from his studies, but the opportunities for meeting men of learning, the broadening influence of university associations, the general culture which one absorbs," etc. This is no more and no less sensible than buying a pound of tea for the chromo which is presented with it, or subscribing for a magazine for the sake of some premium. The man who has gone through college and can honestly express such a sentiment confesses that he has fed himself on husks and thrown away the good grain. If a young man, on leaving the high school, can afford the time and has no higher ambition than to play ball or become an oarsman or edit an amateur paper, he may as well engage in such pursuits at college as at home; he will at least have the fun of college life, and he can scarcely fail to receive some indirect benefit from his associations. But, in these times, there is danger of forgetting that colleges exist as educational institutions and not as athletic or social centres. Do not understand me to sneer at athletics or amateur journalism, or at any proper recreation of student life. We need amusement at all ages, and the wisest men are those whose lives are fullest of genuine and innocent enjoyment; but one cannot help despising the man or woman who makes a business of pleasure and neglects the serious duties of life.

You have heard, altogether too often, of good students whose lives have been failures, and of apparently stupid or certainly lazy pupils who have amassed large fortunes. It is a fact that the keenest business

sagacity is not often associated with the finest literary or scientific tastes; but do not imagine that a person's success after graduation is due to his inability or unwillingness to make a success of his school work. Such logic is as false as to suppose that a boy may become a second Greeley if he will only make his writing as illegible as possible. Neither must it be supposed that the very rich man is happier, or more respected, or more truly successful, than the man who passes through life with a fair income and with the credit of having done his work well.

A college education will be of advantage to you in two ways: first, by directly assisting your business or professional career; secondly, by broadening your enjoyment of life and preventing the withering of faculties which takes place when an ignorant person is removed from active life and thrown on his own companionship. All good colleges now present to their students a choice of four years' study out of a possible twenty or more. So far as the second object of a college education is concerned, it matters little what subjects are chosen, provided individual tastes and abilities are consulted and some systematic course is followed. But, for practical service in later years, a better choice can be made if the student decides on his life-work before entering college or by the middle of his course. For example, it is natural that a prospective minister should study Hebrew and Greek, the languages of the Bible, and Latin, the language of the early Church. The physician has no especial use for Hebrew, but he certainly ought to be able to translate the forty thousand words of Greek and Latin origin which he will be required to understand. Chemistry will be of use not only to the physician, but also to the electrician, photographer, and worker in almost any kind of metal. Fortunes have depended on geological information, and it is almost if not quite literally true that "it is worth money to know any one thing better than other people do." Let me warn you, however, not to be too near-sighted and too "practical" in selecting your studies. Remember that the intrinsic value of a liberal education, like that of gold, depends largely on the very fact that it cannot be put to ordinary commercial and manufacturing uses.

In choosing among the many excellent colleges of the country, a number of circumstances must be considered. A young man preparing for the ministry will naturally seek a college under the auspices of his own denomination, while, otherwise, it is usually best to select an undenominational college, and preferably, other things being equal, one under public control. It is proper to choose an institution whose reputation will be a source of pride in later years; yet in many instances a college may be preferred because nearer home or having some local advantages. On the whole, I would advise a boy or girl to go to a large college. Whether the girl should go to the same college as the boy is a question for parents to decide; though, from personal experience, I can say that the presence of young ladies in the class-room has a good influence on the young men without perceptibly lowering the refinement of the former. There is a mistaken idea that the boy at a small college has more personal attention from the faculty than

the student at a large institution. It must be considered that where there are more students there are also more teachers and considerably more college interest, which tends to draw faculty and students together.

To some extent, the choice of studies bears on the choice of college; but a good general education can be obtained at any reputable institution, and practically all of the great universities offer so wide a range of studies that all but the most peculiar cases can be provided for.

The expenses at different institutions vary widely, so that most catalogues give estimates of the cost of living. It is a terrible ordeal, almost an impossibility, to go through college at the lower limit stated, while the maximum represents wasted money, wasted time, and, too often, wasted character. There are excellent colleges at which the annual expense need not exceed three hundred dollars, including neat clothing, plain but wholesome board, and some amusement. There are others, no better from an educational stand-point, at which twice that allowance would be insufficient for the comforts of student life. My advice to a young man of limited means is this: Do not sacrifice four of the best years of your life, and embitter what ought always to be a pleasant memory, for the sake of the prestige of graduating from some celebrated university. There are plenty of colleges where a first-class education can be cheaply obtained, and it is not worth while to lose the benefits of social life, to make yourself a recluse, to humble a natural and proper pride, in order to get the same education and the same title from a college more widely known for its teams and its glee-club.

If you impress the members of higher classes as being a desirable acquaintance or as likely to reflect credit on them as a student, you will soon be "rushed" for one or more of the fraternities. But remember that you must not seek this honor. Whether or not you will join a fraternity, and, if so, which one, is an important question. A good fraternity with a chapter-house offers you a home—a home, to be sure, in a family composed entirely of boys and young men and without the refining and restraining influence of father, mother, and sisters—at an expense not much if at all greater than that of board elsewhere. In such a chapter you will find ready friends who will bring out the best there is in you and help you in many ways, while the chapter meetings will afford you literary, musical, elocutionary, and parliamentary training. After graduation, too, you will still enjoy the privilege of having friends—though strangers—scattered over the country. On the other hand, some fraternity chapters are clubs of the most dissipated and vicious men at college, and membership in such a society is a disgrace as well as a damage. Between these two extremes are all grades of fraternity life. Some chapters, though not positively bad, are expensive and frivolous; in others there is determined and selfish striving after mastery in college politics. At some of the larger universities college pride is so in excess of fraternity spirit that society membership amounts to little; at the smaller colleges, fraternity pride is in the ascendant, and membership becomes more and more important

to the student's welfare, though never indispensable. The status of the local chapter is of more practical importance to you than that of the fraternity as a whole, yet it is unwise to affiliate with a society whose chapters at other colleges cannot receive your approbation, while the best societies have the same aim and about the same standing in all their chapters. It is well to be guided, to some extent, by the fraternity ties of relatives and friends; but you must remember that a chapter which was excellent in your father's time may have degenerated, and that your cousin, at a college hundreds of miles away, may enjoy a very different fraternity atmosphere from that which you would find at your own college. Finally, be broad-minded enough to recognize that the fraternity which is best for you may not be absolutely better than some other, and that some difference in methods and aims is necessary to suit different temperaments.

A. L. Benedict.

OUR STREET NAMES.

JUDGING by the names given to our streets, we Americans might be considered the least aesthetic people in the world. Nowhere else is there such a general regard, in that respect, for system and convenience, at a sacrifice of every other consideration. Such a locality as "the corner of Avenue A and Twenty-Third Street" is almost as distinctively American as Algonkin and Iroquois names like Mississippi and Saratoga. The result is that many of our city maps look like a mixture of the English alphabet and the multiplication-table, with a few proper names thrown in to relieve the monotony. A foreigner is apt to be led by this state of things into thinking of our large cities as places where social life goes on with absolute and mechanical precision,—a notion that has a family resemblance to the European idea that non-urban Americans are formed on a model made up of Leatherstocking and a cowboy. Yet it is by no means certain that this widespread ignoring of everything but "business methods" in naming our thoroughfares does not to some extent influence our character as a nation. Shakespeare to the contrary notwithstanding, there is much in a name, and though a rose by any other name would smell as sweet in a physical sense, the associations that would be lost by the change have a sweetness of their own which could not be easily spared. Our habit of depending for street titles on mere alphabetic and numerical signs may react on us in a way that is not advantageous. We are quite practical and prosaic enough now, and anything that tends to make us more so is not a thing to be desired.

If this kind of nomenclature were applied to whole cities or States, its bareness and hardness would be more immediately apparent and its incongruity more quickly felt. In the early reconstruction era, when the Southern States were still governed as military districts,—the time when, as was there said, "peace broke out," some of Lee's paroled men were accustomed to say,—

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is District Number One'?"

In fact, to conceive anything like patriotic devotion to a vowel, or ardent enthusiasm over a decimal fraction, would require a more active fancy than most people possess.

Boston showed as much good taste as patriotism in giving such a name as Washington to a thoroughfare worthy to bear it. Though some other cities have applied titles of that sort to streets and squares, the custom has not been observed as often as might have been expected. President Lincoln's name, for instance, has not been given to many streets, although, as a novelist has said, Lincoln has been canonized.

In our national capital there is no lack of American historical and geographical street names; but even there the alphabet asserts itself with great force, and helps to supply the brand-new, made-to-order effect so usual in this country. Some of our cities show a tendency to use historic and patriotic names systematically, and if this were done in regular order it would have some of the advantages claimed for the meaningless letter and figure method, without its counteracting defects. In one case most of the streets around two monuments have names connected with national or State history; but the exceptions to the rule keep this from being, in that instance, a really sure guide. A few changes there, giving unbroken continuity to these patriotic names, would be well worth making.

The places where the letter and figure style has not yet made its appearance seem to visitors from those localities where it prevails strangely slow and old-fashioned. Such towns are plentiful in the South, and their Prince George Streets and Queen Anne Streets carry us back in imagination to the days before Rip Van Winkle lay down to take his famous nap. As these towns are not large enough to make it very hard for anybody to find any street in them, convenience makes no special demands, and it would be a pity if the ambitious spirit of progress should introduce meaningless symbols in place of the old forms which have so much individuality.

The street names of Indian origin are perhaps more truly American than any others that can be found, and their significations sometimes make them appropriate in another way. But their meanings are known to so few of those who use the names that this is not of much value, and their forms—especially when corrupted by English, French, or Spanish borrowers—are apt to present formidable difficulties. Shackamaxon and Tchoupitoulas are pitfalls for the unwary, and the strangers who talk glibly of Póttomac and Chckago deserve nothing but sympathy.

About the worst street names we have are those given by demagogues and ward politicians to perpetuate their own or their friends' memories. Fortunately these are not very numerous, and they are always easy to abolish when the boss who brings them into being has lost his power. Tweed was too sagacious to let his henchmen erect a monument to him in his lifetime, as they were eager to do at the public

expense, and the average boss has much of the same kind of discretion. In fact, this evil is one that is always likely to remedy itself.

Botanical street names that are made visibly appropriate by the trees growing along the sidewalks have much to recommend them, and even where the trees are no longer to be seen such names are suitable mementos of departed vegetation,—fitting tributes to the chestnuts and pines and elms of the past. But when they are adopted only for the sake of prettiness, and in places where such trees never did and never will grow unless in conservatories, the gracefulness of the effect is marred by its absurdity. The myrtles and magnolias of mere fancy, chilled by frost and decorated with icicles, almost justify the hard practicality of the opposite extreme, and make up for "Avenue A."

Of course the convenience of the letter and figure system cannot be questioned, but this consideration is of less importance now than it was before the days of rapid transit. The "motorman" now has the matter in charge, and, however objectionable his own title may be to the purist in etymology, he must, of necessity, be competent to meet all demands as to street names. His own convenience is not likely to be considered, but he has no special reason for personal preference, for he could announce the proximity of a Lincoln or a Calaveras Street as easily as that of one called 739th. That figure may not be altogether out of the question, for, if our large cities should keep up their present rate of growth, the time may come when the alphabet will be exhausted and such heavy demands made on the Arabic numerals that none but those who are skilled in mathematics will find figures less troublesome in this way than real names would be.

It is probably useless to expect that there will be any marked improvement in the ordinary American practice as to street-names while the namers are chiefly professional politicians, as their methods seldom undergo any material change. But if the effort to raise the standard of municipal government should be successful throughout the country, its effect might be felt in this matter as well as in others, and the scholar in politics might bring his culture and taste to bear on the question with good results. It is not beyond probability that titles may be found which will be systematic and easy to remember as well as suggestive and appropriate, and that street names may help the school-teacher without being a temptation to profanity for any one else.

William Ward Crane.

IN VAIN.

SING to the narrowed soul and hardened heart full well
 Songs of the fairest truth and purest love that be,
 No thoughts rise up to greet; no joy, no sympathy,
 Nor hope, nor aspiration gladly answers thee;
 For beauty stirs no soul where beauty does not dwell.

Preston Cooke Farrar.

PRIVATE BARNEY HOGAN.

WITHIN the memory of the oldest soldier in the regiment, there had never been a time when the men of Troops "C" and "H" were not on bad terms with each other. When stationed in the far Southwest, their barracks had adjoined, and scarcely a pay-day had passed that the "Blarneys" and the "Dutch Rifles," as they were in the habit of calling each other, were not mixed up in some disgraceful imbroglio. And when, after twelve years spent in pacifying Apaches and in building up comfortable army posts for their successors to enjoy, the regiment was ordered to Wyoming, fate ironically ordained that these same two troops of cavalry should be again assigned to adjoining barracks, separated only by a narrow adobe sally-port.

The rank and file of Troop "C" were Irish, from the first sergeant down to the last private in the rear rank. The former was a typical trooper of the old school, who in the haleyon days succeeding the war of the rebellion had wielded his authority with all the independence of a Gaelic chieftain. Woe to the unlucky German recruit who might be assigned to Troop "C!" McGlory and his associates soon found a way to cause him either to desert or else transfer to a more congenial organization. And it was likewise true of Troop "H" that no Irishman ever found his name upon the roster of First Sergeant Spiegel that he did not bemoan his fate and inwardly curse the recruiting officer in far-away New York who had unsuspectingly assigned him to the "Dutch Rifles." In the new northern country the old state of affairs had gone on, in spite of the efforts of the regimental commander and the respective captains of the two troops to preserve the peace. The spirit was almost akin to that of a vendetta, which after resting peacefully for a time would again spring forth when least expected. And it was to this very fact that I owed my first acquaintance with Private Hogan, of Troop "C."

I was crossing the grassy parade one fine summer day, when I was suddenly made aware that something was amiss in the rear of the barracks occupied by Troop "C." Loud voices could be heard, and a sergeant in his shirt-sleeves appeared at the front door and ran quickly around through the sally-port. As I was officer of the day, I immediately became interested. Cheers were heard, some apparently of victory, others of encouragement. As I started towards the uproar there was a quick step behind me, and as I partially turned I received the salute of a young Irish soldier, who broke into a run after passing me. He was a perfect giant in stature, and his well-shaped head was surmounted by a shock of fiery red hair. His face was a good-natured one, sunburned, and covered with a generous supply of freckles. He was faultlessly uniformed, and this, with his white gloves and shining waist-belt, proved him to be the commanding officer's orderly. As he crossed the distant road at breakneck speed, he first threw off belt and afterwards blouse, and disappeared through the sally-port,

where his appearance seemed to be greeted with a chorus of yells. I quickened my pace, but as I approached the barracks the noise ceased, and when I passed the sally-port not a soldier save one was to be seen; and this one was the red-headed Irishman, who was in the act of picking up his cap. His shirt was torn and his fine new trousers covered with mud, but at my approach he straightened up with the rigidity of a marble statue. His assumed dignity was ludicrous in the extreme. The thick red hair stood out in tufts, wet and dishevelled, while the great beads of perspiration on his forehead seemed to increase momentarily in size and number as I sternly looked him in the face.

"What's the matter here?" I shouted, gruffly.

He respectfully touched his hand to the visor of his cap, and replied, with some confusion,—

"Sorr, Throop 'H' has insulted us again."

"But you've been fighting. What is your name, sir?"

"Sorr, some calls me Hoogan, others calls me Ho-gán, but I calls meself Hogan,—Private Barney Hogan, of Throop 'C,' sorr," he added, with just a touch of dignity. "And as for the foightin', sorr, wan of those dirty blackgards nixt door yilled at our cook, Dinnis Connor, whilst he was afther takin' a pail of clane wather acrost the yard, a-wantin' to know if the throop was now livin' on wather alone. 'No,' yills Dinnis, 'but I'll give yez what the loikes of yez has long been nadin';' and with that he claps the pail of wather on Private Schneider's head, and the two throops wint at it, hot and heavy."

Poor Hogan! I was on the court-martial that tried him and others for conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline, the specifications alleging that he, Private Barney Hogan, Troop "C," did, with certain others, engage in a fight in the rear of his troop quarters. When asked by the judge advocate whether he had anything to say in his own defence, Barney disclaimed all intention of engaging in a fight, and most emphatically declared that he had done all in his power "to kape the pace."

"I suppose, Hogan," interrupted the president of the court, "that you acted on the principle that the sooner the soldiers of Troop 'H' were knocked out, the sooner peace would prevail."

"This was how it happened, sorr. On this same day I was arderly for the commandanting officer of this post. And as the arderly thrum-peter was blowin' miss-call, I happened to cast me eyes in the same direction, and it was meself sees Sergeant Clancy with his coat off runnin' through the sally-port loike mad, and I knew what it mint. So I reports to the kurnel for dinner relief, and says I rale quiet-loike to the kurnel, sez I,—

"'Sorr, there's a foight on in 'C' Throop.'

"'Sure,' sez he, 'is that so?'

"'Yis,' sez I. "'H' Throop is murderin' 'C' Throop.'

"'Where's the officer of the day?' sez the kurnel.

"'Divil a bit—beggin' your pardon—do I know,' sez I, for me blood was up.

"'And shall I sthop the foight; sorr?' sez I, rale quiet-loike again.

" 'Yis,' sez the kurnel, with a glance out of his eyes, sizin' me up. "So with that I runs to the barracks, and I did me best to sthop the foight, I did. And sure I'd sthopped it entoirely if the dirty blackguards, seein' the lootnant come, hadn't ivry mother's son of 'em run for his hole, loike so many prairie-dogs."

Private Hogan was told that he could retire, and he did so with all the dignity of a prince of the royal blood. When, a few days later, his sentence was published in orders, it was found that the pitiless court-martial had sentenced "the said Private Barney Hogan to be confined at hard labor under charge of the post guard for the period of one month."

Occasionally after that I caught sight of the tall figure clad in brown overalls, the red hair surmounted by a drab campaign hat, meekly following the wood-wagon about the post, while a few feet away a sentinel with loaded carbine stood as a representative of the majesty of the military law. Poor Barney appeared so crestfallen that when I suddenly came upon him a few days later, as he was engaged in the compulsory cutting of wood for the post bakery, I could not refrain from speaking to him. His reply was characteristic.

"Sorr," said he, "this is a quare wurld, where a man is disgraced for doin' his juty. But, lootnant," looking cautiously about and lowering his voice to a whisper, while his blue eyes sparkled, "I'd do two months for another rale good row with them Dutch Roiffies."

Over a year after this Private Barney again came prominently into notice, and the circumstances were such as to make a lasting impression on my mind. It was a night in February, and a genuine blizzard was raging. The thermometer hanging at the front door of my quarters registered forty degrees below zero, and the cutting northwest wind blew the snow against the window-panes with such force as to sound like hail. Through the whitening glass nothing was visible, and it was dangerous even to attempt finding one's way to the front gate. The paymaster, who, in the teeth of the storm, had just arrived from the far-away railroad station, was congratulating himself over having reached my comfortable quarters by nightfall, when there came a pounding at the front door, and with the cold wind and snow which entered with a rush came a tall and muscular figure, so muffled in fur overcoat, cap, and gloves as to be unrecognizable. Out of the furs came a well-known voice:

"Sorr, Private Hogan reports as arderly for the paymaster, and the commandanting officer sinds his compliments and sez the major naden't report till marnin', bein' such a noight, sorr."

"Very well, orderly," returned the major; "you may go to your quarters and report in the morning at seven. But hold on a minute," he added, and then, calling me aside,—

"Is this man perfectly trustworthy?"

"Perfectly so. Why?" I replied.

"Because if you can let him sleep here in your quarters to-night, I'd feel much easier. The fact is," lowering his voice to a whisper, "you know I came directly here through the storm and dismissed my escort, without, as usual, locking up my funds in the trader's safe.

The consequence is that, with the money for the Colorado posts, I have a considerable sum to stay overnight with you."

"How much, by the way?" I asked, with some curiosity.

"A cool fifteen thousand in gold and greenbacks."

"The Dickens!" was my startled rejoinder.

"I don't propose," continued the major, "taking it to the store on a night like this, myself; and I certainly shall not trust it to any other person to take there for me."

So it was soon decided that Barney was to remain, and it did not take long to install him comfortably in one of the back rooms of my bachelor quarters, where the pungent odor of his short black pipe soon announced to the rest of the house that he was enjoying himself in his own way.

It was between one and two o'clock that night that I was awakened by a loud pounding on my door, followed by the voice of the major as he shouted, in excited tones,—

"Hurry up, man, for God's sake. Some one has made off with my valise." And then, pell-mell, he rushed down-stairs.

Fairly jumping into my clothes, I was a few moments later in the lower hall. The front door was wide open, and, grabbing my overcoat from the rack as I passed, I rushed out into the night. The storm still raged, and, blindly groping my way to the front gate, I unexpectedly ran up against the major, who was returning, bareheaded and scantily clad.

"It's no use, my boy; nothing can be seen or heard in such a storm," he hoarsely shouted, and together we returned to the house. Then, as if actuated by a common impulse, we strode in silence to the room which Hogan had occupied. A light revealed the soldier's blankets thrown back as if he had just arisen. His overcoat and fur cap lay carelessly over the back of a chair, and his heavy cavalry boots were alongside, where he had evidently pulled them off. The major and I looked at each other askance. Neither spoke.

Five minutes later we had forged through the drifts to the guard-house, and, while the major led the sergeant and a patrol of the guard across to the officers' line, I roused the companies. Soon the barracks were ablaze with light, and the troops were quickly formed in their squad-rooms for roll-call. A messenger had meanwhile been despatched to the colonel's quarters, and soon he and his adjutant came stumbling through the blizzard to the guard-house.

It did not take long to call the rolls, and in a very few minutes, down through the blinding mist, from the right and from the left, came the first sergeants to make their reports to the adjutant. Only two men in the entire command were shown by the reports to be missing and not accounted for, and these were Private Hogan of Troop "C" and Private Eckstein of Troop "H."

Supplied with lanterns, one search-party attempted to find the tracks of the missing men around my snow-bound quarters; while the others, keeping well together for mutual protection, made as thorough a search as was possible in such a storm of the barracks, stables, and outbuildings. No horses were found missing, but the most diligent

search failed to reveal anything else but the fact that few human beings could live for any length of time in such an atmosphere. And so the trumpeters blew the "recall," and the search was postponed until morning.

The poor major! It was in vain that we assured him that the money would surely be recovered,—that no human being could escape through such a blizzard. He could not or would not be comforted. Theories were advanced that the two men were confederates and had absconded together, using a relay of ponies, but the intense bitterness between the men of the two troops seemed to overthrow such an argument; and I could never believe that Barney Hogan's honest blue eyes were those of a thief.

We sat around the fire until the gray dawn began to steal in at the windows and our unobscured view of the men's quarters proved that the storm had abated. Our eagerness to resume the search then put an end to all speculation.

We breakfasted at reveille with our troops, and immediately afterwards a systematic search was begun. It hardly seemed possible that men could have gone far from the post, alive, in such a storm. Nevertheless, details of mounted men were sent out from each organization to scour the surrounding country. All other available men of the command explored every nook and cranny of the post. At the noon hour nothing had been discovered by any of the search-parties to account in any way for the mysterious disappearance of the two soldiers.

Mine were the first in the long line of officers' quarters. Outside and beyond lay the prairie, practically boundless in extent. Straight away towards the west, and not always following the rough wagon-road, ran the telegraph line, the connecting link between the post and the distant railroad station, its icy poles the only dark objects in all the white landscape. After dinner, at the suggestion of the major, the search was prosecuted in this direction. Doubts had sprung up in the minds of many as to the success of our labors, and it was a forlorn hope that caused us to turn towards this eye-wearying expanse of snow. And yet men who were lost had often before followed the friendly line of telegraph poles, so that the search in this direction was well worth the trial.

A skirmish-line of soldiers was formed to cover a hundred yards of prairie, and the advance was begun. Occasionally a larger drift than usual would attract the attention of the men, and they would rush forward with a shout, their brown canvas storm-coats buried to the armpits in the yielding mass, and scatter the snow in all directions. But progress was slow and the labor fatiguing. The enthusiasm which had been evinced in the early part of the day had gradually disappeared as the search went on. And now, as failure seemed assured, disappointment was universal and marked.

But suddenly the wildest interest and excitement were aroused by a clue. A great shout arose at the centre of the long line. Disregarding military strictness, the men came hurrying in from both sides, and we were soon gazing on what proved to be the frozen carcass of an Indian pony. It was tied to a telegraph-pole, and the taut-drawn knot

of the raw-hide halter showed that the poor animal's struggle for life had been a brave one.

With the pole as a centre, the soldiers eagerly set out in radial directions to cover the surrounding ground, while a little knot of officers stood by the dead pony, our excitement roused to the highest point of expectation.

Soon a shout from a tall trooper on the right, not a hundred yards away, brought us to the spot with a rush. Then, except for the voice of a sergeant as he directed the men in their labor of scraping away the ice and snow, there was dead silence. Quickly the work progressed, and soon two frozen forms were brought to view. The under body, the hands clasped tightly around the waist of the other and the face wearing an expression of abject fear, was that of Private Eckstein, of Troop "H." The other one, hatless and bootless, his face a study of courage and stern determination, and his right hand grasping Eckstein's throat in a grasp which two men could scarcely break, was the lifeless body of Private Barney Hogan, of Troop "C." Not ten feet away, a valise was picked up which contained, unharmed, fifteen thousand dollars in gold and greenbacks.

Charles Dudley Rhodes, U.S.A.

A SIMILITUDE OF SHIPS.

WHEN man and wife have lived as one being for many years, it is no strange thing to see, or imagine, the same smile on their lips, the same look out of their eyes. It has been my fancy more than once that a resemblance of this sort could be seen clearly printed on the face of the town and the harbor. So long have they stood side by side that it were strange if they had not caught at least an outward attribute or two of wedded persons. As the folk of the town, if the fancy be admitted, so are the craft of the port. One need not construct here a poetic similitude of ships; but from a few of the likenesses which the eyes have seen the reader may surely conjure up the poem which another pen would have put upon paper.

What, then, are these craft in the harbor, and who are their analogues ashore? First of all, the tugs and ferry-boats seem to be none other than the bustling little men of trade and transit, who do their fellow-townsmen unspeakable service, even if they are sometimes the more absurd Mr. Panckses of real life. "Toil unsevered from tranquillity" is what they rarely perform; yet, foolish as their stir and bustle must often make them appear to gods and some men, they are certainly of those to whom thanks are due.

Then there are the men of more wholesale commerce, the coasters, large and small. Pulled about by the little men they often are, here in the harbor. They know not always exactly how to manage their affairs in the crowded waters, and the friendly guidance of a smaller person saves them from many a danger and disgrace. A fuming little

steam-tug dragging a four-masted coasting-schooner is like a single pony at the pole of a chariot; yet it can do its work more ably than the animal of our figure, and, putting ourselves in the schooner's place, we must take off our hats (or dip our colors) to it. What, indeed, would the monstrous barges, the hulks cut adrift from the old shipping of days that are gone, do without these new concentrations of a giant's strength in a dwarf's body?

The glistening brightness of the pleasure-craft skimming about on fair days—shall the polish of their brass-work be mentioned?—shows forth beyond a mistake the children of enjoyment. Cheap and vulgar, meretricious in their beauty, they may all too easily be; yet who would overlook the catboat semblances of boys and girls at play, or the young athletes, the smaller yachts, setting forth on eager races and returning in the glory of their strength, or the statelier vessels of pleasure, the great yachts, raising and dignifying beauty to a point which is touched only in the most gracious forms of art wrought by the men who abide on land?

Shall we forget the passenger boats of river and sound, the dredges, the tenders, the naphtha launches (the last emblems of modernity), or the fishermen and water-boats? No: they sail before us one by one, and it is only because the greater portion of the suppressed poem must be left unwritten that they are allowed to pass, innocent of simile, for the reader to dress as he will.

Yet there are vessels, longer and taller and sturdier than any of these, which cannot be so easily given over. With their yard-arms huddling together, they lie silent along the wharves. They are the ships of long voyages, the "liners" and merchantmen of distant seas, resting here in port for the space that comes between their labors in the world's great tasks. They are the great men, with no boisterous display or haste, gathering and giving, quiet in the midst of their fellows, looking down, yet without scorn, on the little people of the place, and waiting for the moment when the next broad journey shall begin. Here they are in men's eyes, for wonder and praise; but unseen of others, alone by night and noon, out on the ocean of obscure paths they do their work, venturing greatly, winning and losing not the small things which concern the vessels that keep the land within easy reach, but the golden prizes of life. The few lofty, venturesome men build the greatness of the town, and it is a fortunate port past the headlands of which sail these true adventurers of the sea, these greater ships that dare to face every strenuous moment and day they were built to conquer.

M. A. De Wolfe Howe.

AN EPITAPH.

A SK not my name, for nameless here I lie,
Who lived a life, and bade Love pass me by.
Robert Gilbert Welsh.

THE BOOK WHICH HAS MOST BENEFITED ME.

IN a serious attempt to grapple with a question upon a "child study" syllabus, I stumbled upon a fact in my own moral development which I think is worthy of a little thought, as being possibly a typical case.

The subject was Moral Education, and the question was as follows: "What are your favorite books, and why? Name a few, in the order of the benefit which you have received from them." It was the latter part of the question which especially set me thinking.

One's natural impulse would be, of course, to attribute whatever good, moral as well as other, which had come to him from books, to high literary sources; and if I had been passing a hurried examination I should probably have scribbled a list beginning with Shakespeare and Browning. But I was not in a hurry, and I meditated.

What that I had ever read had most distinctly and unmistakably made an impress upon my character?

Slowly from the chaos of memory began to emerge the story of the bad little boy who threw stones at an old and shabbily dressed traveller who turned out to be a long-lost uncle coming back rich from foreign parts, with a gold watch in his pocket for the bad little boy; the story of the little boy who tied something across the road to trip up passers-by, and so tripped up and fatally (or almost fatally) delayed a messenger running for a doctor for the little boy's own father; the story of the little girl who stole a rose, with the direst consequences; the poem about the (I fear, rather self-righteous) youth who was at first afraid of a guide-post, thinking it a ghost, but who at last advanced boldly upon it, saying to himself, "No harm can happen to the good;" and a host of vaguer recollections of poetically just rewards and punishments.

It is astonishing, it is almost humiliating, but it is indubitable, that nothing in ancient or modern literature has had so direct an influence upon my life and conduct as the tales in my school reader.

If I should be called upon to say what one composition in profane literature has most restrained me from evil-doing, I should be inclined to single out the story of the little boy who lost a gold watch by throwing stones at his uncle, and who was forced to "hang his head" at the otherwise joyful family reunion.

To be obliged to hang my head seemed to me the acme of ill fortune,—none the less, perhaps, from an early impression that in such cases it was suspended by a string.

I was not at any time especially inclined to throw stones at unoffending travellers, but the delusiveness of appearances, the constant risk of detection in evil, the natural connection between wrong-doing and shame, remorse, and retribution, were summed up for me in this story.

I do not say that the effect of these early readings was wholly and unmixedly good. One could hardly expect so much from any product of human wisdom.

In the course of establishing in the child's mind, by concrete instances, certain important associations of ideas,—virtue and happiness, vice and misery,—it is almost inevitable that minor associations which are more or less arbitrary should sometimes arise. When, for example, the gift of a penny to a blind beggar results in the acquisition by the giver of a gold dollar and the applause of her entire acquaintance, the child will not impossibly deduce the general law that the gift of a penny in charity is an investment which yields fabulous returns of gain and glory. To this day, I confess, I have a vague expectation whenever I perform an act of trifling kindness or civility to an unpromising-looking stranger that in some way a magnificent and romantic reward is sure to follow,—a reward out of all proportion to the goodness of the deed ; which, alas, is fatal to disinterestedness ! So, too, there is a closer connection in my mind between truancy and drowning than perhaps the facts of life may fully warrant ; but, good or doubtful, the effects are deep and ineradicable.

Reason may assure me, for example, that there is no especial virtue in aimlessly depriving myself of a part of my natural rest ; yet few things produce a more self-complacent frame of mind than early rising. To be busy, no matter about what, while the other members of the household are sleeping invariably causes a feeling of superiority which borders upon arrogance.

There was a poem beginning "Up, up, Lucy,"—or, as one especially careful reader rendered it, "Double up, Lucy,"—which forcibly set forth its merits, and this it is, no doubt, which tyrannizes over me to-day.

It is strange to consider that things despicable as literature have left a deep and abiding imprint upon my moral nature, which the world's masterpieces have seemed to leave almost untouched. It is wonderful to think how much more influence in my life has been exerted by some Jane or Susan in long white pantalets than by lovely Rosalind or queenly Portia. Even if I had known these children of Shakespeare's brain at the impressionable age at which I made the acquaintance of Jane and Susan, I cannot believe that Rosalind and Portia could have taken their places as potent forces in my every-day life.

For a given virtue or vice to impress a child, it must be isolated. Its supposed possessor must be little, if any, more than the embodiment of that one trait, and it must work out its proper reward or punishment with the fatality of a Greek drama.

Little as, to the adult taste, the jam disguises the powder in these moral tales, there is to the very young reader all the difference in the world between a story depicting the guilt and subsequent punishment of James Wilson the Truant Boy, and an unadorned disquisition upon the nature and consequences of truancy.

There is a little girl of my acquaintance who is almost morbidly alive to the power and pathos of the fiction of her reading-book,—a little girl who at times obviously imitates the more picturesque and striking good deeds therein described. She came one day in the course of her lessons to a page of precepts such as,—

"Do not slam the door and make a loud noise about the house.

"Do not, at the table, eat in a greedy manner like a pig."

Suddenly she shut her book with a wrathful bang.

"The Third Reader shan't boss *me!*" she said, defiantly.

Conveyed in the form of a series of mildly exciting anecdotes of little girls who did or did not do those particular naughty things, and who reaped condign punishment or well-merited reward accordingly, these admonitions would have been received with the utmost meekness. She would have rejoiced at the just fate which overtook Greedy Lucy: she would have thrilled when the virtuous conduct of Gentle Jane caused her mother to "drop a tear."

There were, by the way, few things more affecting to my own young fancy than this oft-dropped parental tear, which I pictured to myself single, pear-shaped, and of heroic size.

One cannot help wondering whether there has not been an undue reaction against the moral tale, and whether in consequence the vast opportunity for ethical training which is presented by the child's first contact with the world of letters is not now in a measure lost. When all simple narrative is thrilling to his unjaded taste, we need not fear that he will be bored by even an obtrusive moral. It is indeed the sophisticated taste alone which dislikes a moral. Not children only, but the simpler-minded among adults, are apt to prefer such things in literature as show a clear right to existence in what they "teach;" witness the immense, if transient, popularity of E. P. Roe's novels and Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy."

A child will not unfrequently draw a crude lesson of his own from a perfectly idle tale, as if, without one, he found it perplexing or incomplete. It is not impossibly mistaken kindness which would give nonsense verses to the exclusion of "Mary had a Little Lamb" and "Harry and the Guide-Post" (though my later judgment somewhat recoils from Harry); or nature-studies and Greek myths, to the banishment of Truthful George and Headless Mary. What deep delight, what genuine potency, lie in these humble tales, I for one can testify.

Annie Steger Winston.

THE CHARM OF THE INEXACT.

WHEN a child of two or three is asked if it will have a cake, it naturally answers "Yes," but the cake is withheld until there is added to the original reply "Thank you, ma'am;" all of which may be very polite, but is an infliction that the child should be spared. It is not what is said, but how it is said, that determines the mental status of the speaker. A simple "yes" or "no," as the case may be, spoken in a proper tone and with a meaning look, is better a thousand times over than, in reply to a simple question, to have a small vocabulary impatiently flung at you. We have but to listen to an ordinary conversation between a half-dozen couples in a room, and with our eyes shut we can imagine a battle royal between Webster, Worcester,

and the several new dictionaries. We use too many words; the trouble begins in infancy, and while then it is mere tautology and meaningless, it unavoidably develops a love of inexact statement, as when a child is found perfunctorily adding "I thank you" when it doesn't, and saying "yes" for politeness' sake, or to escape punishment, when its wishes call for "no."

I remember well, when a little boy, being asked by my mother if I did not want to go with Mrs. Bluemonday and carry her bundle. My reply was, "I do not want to go, but I can." Here was an exact statement of the conditions; but I was roundly scolded for being so outspoken. Result, from that day I hated Mrs. Bluemonday.

The man who mentions but the plain fact, or is mathematically or monosyllabically inclined and says "warm" and "cool," meaning just this, for "hot" and "cold," not meaning those conditions,—such a person, I say, is invariably but most unreasonably voted a bore. He cannot meet our extravagant demands, requiring, as we do, recklessness of statement to rouse us to even a semblance of attention. The brilliant man, as he is popularly called, is too often but a polysyllabic chatterer. Fatigue never checks his loquacity, but it is muscular rather than intellectual vigor that stands him so well in need. Why? If we go back to the starting-point of our intellectual careers, we find that the natural disposition to observe literally a scriptural injunction and let "yea" and "nay" suffice is corrected and we are forced to tack on a deal that means nothing usually and sometimes is a positive falsehood. In short, the child that would be terse and truthful is required to be verbose and incorrect. The Psalmist said in his haste, "All men are liars;" if living now, he could and would say it with justified deliberation.

As words are merely signs of our ideas and we come quickly to understanding them, however improperly used, there is no serious harm done, it is claimed; but this we deny. Least of the ills is that most commented upon, the development of a curious condition, the demand for strong statement, for the use of even many adjectives when none are called for. In short, we become charmed, as in the myth of the serpent exerting its power over birds, by the mere tools of speech. For this reason our language appeals to the eye more than to the ear. As written, it is much more artistic than as spoken. We listen to the reading of printed matter with pleasure and profit, but when is conversation akin to this? I trust others have been more fortunate. I have not met a dozen persons who knew thoroughly well how to talk and gave me the feeling of having been fortunate because I had met them. Conversation should be worth the effort of utterance; but how seldom the outcome warrants the wear and tear of the machinery!

There is a ludicrous aspect of this whole question, attached almost exclusively to the conversation of women, which is perhaps a natural outcome of their inborn disposition to recklessness of statement, particularly where some immediate, petty advantage is to be gained and total lack of heed as to the ultimate consequence. It required some months of constant observation, much commingling with womankind at popular gatherings, and a deal of listening unobserved when in stores and

places of amusement, to determine the curious fact, as asserted by these women, that not one of them was ever startled by some sudden occurrence, but always "frightened to death." Never a woman because of a delayed meal felt the condition of hunger, but was "almost starved;" she is never cold, but "positively frozen;" and so to the end of the chapter. The frequency of a woman's nearness to death is so marked, in her conversation, that when the critical time comes we imagine she ought from familiarity with the sensation to shuffle off this mortal coil with inexpressible ease and grace. And perhaps it is from this claimed familiarity that she is able to hoodwink the king of terrors, for she lives to be a hundred much more frequently than falls to the lot of men.

This potent spell, this charm of the inexact, cast over us in early life, is the fountain-head of the all-prevalent insincerity that marks more or less every individual's career; and, ungallant as it may seem to make the statement, this brief dealing with plain facts necessitates that women are to be placed in the front rank in this regard. Not a new bonnet at Easter or new dress at a reception but calls forth the "How lovely!" and "Perfectly exquisite!" that ripple charmingly from rosy lips, but did not bubble up from the heart. Alas, the fair creatures, when they reach home, say to themselves or to their sisters, of this same bonnet or dress, "Wasn't it horrid?" And in the crowded street, when they meet their acquaintances, every one for the moment is their dearest friend, and the sole pleasure of the morning had been to meet them: out of hearing, how frequently this dearest friend is stabbed in the back! How very wonderful and incomprehensible is this charm of the inexact, and how very unnecessary!

Charles C. Abbott.

TWO LETTERS.

THE clouds hung low over the battle-field. It was past midnight, and the wan moon, shining dimly, gave a faint, gray light. Here and there a lantern gleamed, as some one sought a friend among the dead and wounded.

The battle had raged across the cultivated fields, the young corn was trampled under-foot, and in the furrows the bodies of the dead lay thick.

At the foot of a long slope a little stream, bordered on either side with low-growing shrubs, had purled over its pebbly bed. Now the shrubs were uprooted and broken; the brook was gone; only a line of black ooze, with here and there a pool reflecting the faint light,—a pool, not of clear water, but deeply tinged with blood.

A battery had crowned the top of the slope, and on the hill-side the conflict had been hottest. The ground was ploughed with shot and shell. Again and again the charge had been made up the long ascent, only to be beaten back.

When nightfall came, the assaulters and the assaulted, alike, had

abandoned the fatal spot. Only the dead were left to guard the spiked and useless guns.

Horses and men lay piled in confused heaps. In one place a white horse, his head and neck supported by an overturned gun-carriage, seemed, in the dim light, to be in the act of rising to his feet ; across his back was seen a booted leg, held by a brass stirrup, rigid in death.

No night prowlers came near ; no sound broke the stillness. Presently the rain began to fall,—a soft, gentle rain, as though the heavens wept the mad folly of men who thus desecrated the fair earth.

All at once there was a movement in the shadow of the great guns ; then a groan,—a long, sighing groan.

The rain ceased ; the clouds lightened.

In the east a pink flush showed that the short summer night was over and the dawn was at hand.

In this heap of carnage, among these stiffened corpses, where gray and blue uniforms lay together, their faces stern with the battle rage even in death, looking closer, one could see two forms which moved,—which feebly stirred.

The rain had waked them from the sleep of death, and they were struggling back to life and consciousness.

As the light grew stronger, a hideous head raised itself and looked around : a blood-streaked face, long hair matted with gore, and blackened lips. With an inarticulate cry of agony it dropped, then rose again.

Under this crushed and mangled human being lay another form, which writhed, which groaned.

With a superhuman effort the upper one rolled to one side. As he did so, a sharp throb of agony shot through him, and he fainted.

When consciousness returned, the man next him, wounded, blood-soaked, and ghastly, was wetting his fingers with the water which dripped from the cannon above them, and was bathing his face.

The two lay side by side, so close that their bloodshot eyes gazed into each other.

“Thank you,” murmured the Confederate, as the other passed his wet fingers again over his lips.

“All right,” said the other. “I feared you were gone. Can you move a little?”

“No,” replied the Confederate. “I did for myself when I rolled over just now. I am wedged in here, and I think my back——” He stopped speaking ; his eyes closed.

“My right side is crushed,” said the Federal officer, after a pause, “and there is something against my back. I cannot stir.” The something was a heap of slain, horrible, undistinguishable, men blown to pieces by an exploding caisson ; but they could not see that.

“Do you think you will get out of this?” asked the Confederate, hoarsely.

“I doubt it,” coolly replied the other ; “but if the ambulance corps comes round in time I might have a chance. That shower was a blessed good thing for us.”

“I don’t know ; I believe I would rather not have come back to

life. When I fell I thought it was all over. See here, old chap, have you a bit of paper?"

"Yes, in my coat-pocket; but I can't reach it."

The other man with some difficulty took from the indicated pocket some pieces of soiled and crumpled letter-paper.

"I had a bit of pencil," he muttered. With feeble and shaking hands he felt in his pockets. "Here it is."

He lay exhausted. The sun was rising; the level rays shone across the fields and sparkled upon the wet guns.

"It seems strange the sun should rise and shine just the same, doesn't it?" said the Southerner.

"Yes, it does. And how still it is, after the hell of yesterday! Where do you come from?"

"Georgia. I have a wife and baby there. If you get out of this, I want you to send my wife word. I will write a line and her address if I can." He sighed heavily, and great drops of sweat collected on his brow.

"I will—I swear it," said the other, earnestly. "I am from Vermont. I am not married, but my mother and sisters—" His voice failed. The tears rolled down his beardless face.

Meanwhile the Georgian tried to write.

"I can't hold the paper," he said at last; "my left hand is numb."

The Vermonter held out his left arm. "Lay it against my arm," said he.

So, painfully and very slowly, the dying man wrote,—

"Mary, my darling, I am dying on the field. My last thought is of you and the baby. God bless you!" Then the name, date, and address.

The Northerner looked on as the other laboriously folded the paper with his one hand. "It is bloody," said he.

"Never mind; it will be better than nothing," answered the Georgian, with a sob.

"Is there another piece of paper?"

"Yes, and an envelope."

"Will you write for me?"

"Certainly."

With infinite pains and difficulty the half-sheet was placed in position and the stiffening fingers held the pencil.

The young officer dictated,—"Dear mother, I am badly wounded. I shall try to live; but if I do not—good-by. Tell Anna not to grieve."

"Can you hold the paper for me so that I can sign it myself?"

"I will try. See, I will put it on my breast. Now take the pencil."

With his left hand the Vermonter printed his name and the address of his mother; then both letters were put in the envelope and returned to the pocket of the Northern soldier.

"Do you know," he asked, "which side holds the field?"

"No; I know nothing after that last charge. I heard the screaming of a shell. I suppose you and I fell together."

"Do you suffer?"

"No, I am past that. And you?"

"I suffer frightfully. My whole right side is crushed. If I only had some water——" His eyes turned to a tin canteen which lay on the ground just out of his reach. The Georgian stretched out his right arm: he could not touch it. "If I had a stick," he murmured. He looked at his companion. "Can you give me your cap?" He took it, wet with blood, threw it over the canteen, and, holding the visor, drew it within reach. The canteen was half full of water.

Both men drank; then they lay quiet. The sun, now fully risen above the horizon, shone upon their upturned faces and dazzled their eyes.

After a little time steps were heard, voices. The Vermont soldier opened his eyes. He could not turn his head, but he uttered a loud, hoarse cry. "Here!" he called. "Halloo, here!"

They came quickly,—a surgeon in blue, men, hospital assistants.

"We were about to leave you," said one. "You just spoke in time."

"There is another fellow," said the wounded soldier. "This one: take him first."

"What! that rebel?" said the man, bending to look. "He is dead, —dead as Julius Cæsar."

They took the wounded man and bore him to the ambulance. As they were about to place him within, he gave the blood-stained envelope to the surgeon.

"Promise me," said he, "to send both these letters,—both of them, will you?"

"Yes, yes; I will attend to it," said the surgeon, as he turned away.

When they reached the hospital tent the Vermonter was dead from loss of blood.

The two letters remained in the surgeon's pocket.

Weeks passed. One afternoon the surgeon looked out of his tent and called to a half-grown negro boy who was kindling a fire some distance away. "Here, Jim, don't you want a coat?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy. He came, running, received the coat, and put it on over his tattered shirt: it hung loosely from his thin shoulders.

"Rather a loose fit, Jim," said the doctor.

"Fits fust-rate; thank ye, sir," said the boy, with a broad grin.

As he went back he felt in the pockets. When he reached the fire he dropped into the flames a few bits of paper. Among them was the blood-stained envelope containing the two letters.

Frances M. Butler.

QUALITY.

THE spider weaves. A patient toiler, lo,
How sure, how fine his touch!
The poet grieves. Alas! he does not know
He spins too fast, too much.

Lillian Plunkett Ferguson.

THE MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE.

THE United States Marine Hospital Service, which will soon celebrate its centennial anniversary, is the most distinctively American institution in our country. There is nothing exactly like it abroad, and foreigners, endeavoring to comprehend its scope, are constantly confusing it with the naval service. It is, on the contrary, one of the important branches of the Treasury Department, and was established, in 1798, in the interests of the merchant marine, by placing a tax of twenty cents a month upon the wages of every seaman employed upon United States vessels of commerce, and using the fund thus derived in affording hospital relief to their sick and disabled. The nucleus of this benevolent system was formed in Boston by providing for the care of patients at local hospitals and the appointment of a physician to look after their welfare. Subsequently Congress appropriated fifteen thousand dollars for the erection of a hospital building for the port of Boston; but the first marine hospital owned by the government was obtained by purchase, in 1800, and was located near Norfolk, Virginia.

The next place that claimed consideration was New Orleans. Prior to the acquisition of the territory of Louisiana, numbers of Western farmers descended the Mississippi River in flat-bottomed boats seeking a market for their commodities, and, arriving at New Orleans during the sickly season, fell easy victims to malarial fever and other diseases of the Southern climate. Persons of influence residing in the city addressed letters to the State Department, calling attention to the fact that numbers of American boatmen were perishing miserably in mean cabins, far from home and friends, and refused admission to the already crowded Spanish Poor Hospital, and that their distress was aggravated by prejudice against the foreign doctors. In response to these appeals the benefits of the Service were extended to this important Gulf port, and a tax of twenty cents per month was levied upon the compensation of each boatman in order to defray the additional expense incurred.

Meanwhile the system had spread north and south from Boston to the principal seaports of the Atlantic coast, and the inland towns along the shores of our Western rivers began to ask for assistance. In these rude settlements there were but scanty accommodations for the sick, and during the ravages of the cholera in 1832 the sufferings of boatmen left stranded in empty warehouses on the wharves were pitiable in the extreme. To these poor neglected wretches, huddled together and dying from cholera, small-pox, and other diseases, the pioneer surgeons of the Marine Hospital Service came truly as angels of mercy. Public sympathy was elicited, and donations of private property were contributed to the good work, Congress lending aid from time to time, till the needs of those engaged in commerce on the Western rivers and the Great Lakes were relieved, and the first marine hospital on the

Pacific coast was commenced in San Francisco, in 1875. The progress of this original civil institution of America had already attracted attention abroad, and the leading medical journals of London were generous in their praise, declaring that "a leaf should be taken from the book of the Marine Hospital Service of the United States." The *Lancet* supplemented this comment by saying, "Our transatlantic neighbors, ahead of us in many things, are most decidedly in advance of the old country in providing for the care of their sick sailors." In 1884 the hospital tax was abolished, and in its stead the tonnage dues received from foreign vessels were made available.

Besides its charitable object, a new duty devolved upon the Service through stress of circumstances. The almost criminal disregard of State quarantine laws which prevailed drew from Supervising Surgeon-General John M. Woodworth an address, delivered before the International Medical Congress at Philadelphia in 1876, which was virtually a crusade against the careless and offending people who imported contagious diseases, and led to the enactment of what has been since known as the Woodworth law. This law established a national quarantine, and empowered the Marine Hospital Service to frame regulations governing the same.

During the past decade the authority of the Service in all quarantine matters has developed widely. It holds entire control of the twelve national quarantine stations, the splendid double defence for the port of Philadelphia which it maintains at Delaware Breakwater and Reedy Island furnishing an excellent example of the thoroughness of this work; it details medical inspectors to supervise all State quarantines and coöperate with their local boards of health; it also sends these officers abroad to act in connection with the consulates and authenticate the bill of health of each vessel sailing for the United States; its surgeons are on duty at our immigrant stations to examine physically every foreigner seeking admission; and whenever an epidemic breaks out in any part of the country, it immediately sends its representatives to establish a military cordon about the infected district to confine and stamp out the pestilence; in fact, it is the guardian of the public health of the nation. Owing to the wise management of Supervising Surgeon-General Walter Wyman and to the watchful care exercised by his trained medical corps, not a case of yellow fever occurred last summer in the once desolated Southern States, and the success with which the cholera has been warded off since 1893 inspires confidence that the much dreaded bubonic plague will not be permitted to invade our country during the present year.

Other beneficiaries of marine hospital privileges are the officers and men of the Revenue Cutter Service, surf-men in the government employ, the crews of light-house tenders, and pilots. Recently two relief-stations have been established on Chesapeake Bay for the special benefit of sick and disabled oystermen, whose hardships in the pursuit of this industry make them worthy objects of charity.

Joanna R. Nicholls:

SINGING: ITS PAST AND ITS POSSIBILITIES.

OUR present system of public instruction is not so modern as some would have us believe. Sparta had her State Superintendent, who—if distant report is to be trusted—was an educational despot. But while he wielded his walking-stick freely during official visits, and encouraged his subordinates to ply the rod on all occasions, he was as diligent a promoter of music as is any humane and progressive educator of our era. As a result, the little Lacedæmonians sang blithely no matter what torment was going on under their tunics. And all over Greece, in those dim days, were schools, ranging from infant grades instructed under Arcadian hedges to university extension schemes harbored in buildings uniquely termed “places of leisure.” The infants were drilled in their alpha-beta-gammas; the older boys were taught poetry and gymnastics, with something of arithmetic, geometry, and drawing; and adults spent their leisure with rhetoricians and sophists, paying handsomely for the privilege. But music was a *sine qua non* of Grecian life, in school and in sport, in battle and in burial. The epic and elegiac chantings at festivals, the calm speculations of Pythagoras as to the music of the spheres, the choral outburst of “the great fifth century,” the martial odes of Tyrtæus and Pindar, all show the national love for melody of voice as well as for high and harmonious thought. An old-time Greek set down amid the strident, metallic voices of our Occidental world would feel that the Furies had seized either upon him or the continent he was visiting.

Hellenic school-hours were from sunrise to sunset. These were long hours, but they were much enlivened by corporal punishment. The young Greeks were not models of deportment, as they were of anatomy. Plato speaks of the boys of the grammar-grades as “the most sharp-witted, insubordinate, and unmanageable of animals.” Many a modern teacher will add, “Plato, thou reasonest well !”

While the word “fad” is comparatively new, and unconquerably unpleasant, most of the vaulting ambitions to which it is applied are distinctly old. As to the music-fad in education, this testimony comes from history: “Every Greek boy had, or was supposed to have, a musical ear; and he was accordingly taught either the harp or the flute, and, with it, singing.”

Aristotle complained that too much time was spent by pupils in practising difficult music. It will be seen that the champions for practical training in education are to-day but re-voicing an old discontent.

Greek girls were not, like their brothers, efficiently drilled in music, though one, the brilliant Sappho, broke the bounds prescribed to her sex, and boldly invented “a mode” of her own. Daniel, reading dreams off in Babylon, may have heard of Sappho’s musical venture; but this is mere conjecture. We know, however, that possibly about this time he and his fellow-captives had abandoned their songs, and

were hanging their harps upon willow-trees in the despair of a great homesickness.

And so, history informs us, the Greeks sang on from youth to age, at feasts and at funerals, in theatres and on battle-fields, until Rome silenced their songs in slavery and death.

Among the antique Romans music had little room for development, there being small range and no sweetness in battle-cries. In the schools of the Saracens it had an honored place, as it had later in those of the Humanists and of the Reformers. As a factor in the popular education of England, it had its vicissitudes between the stirring days of Elizabeth and the stolid ones of the Georges.

Charles Lamb begins an essay thus: "I have no ear." This was his quaint way of announcing that he could not grasp the principles of melody. The solemn old duns of Christ's Hospital probably never mentioned scales, keys, or transposition in the boy's hearing, or treated him, in all those years between eight and fifteen, to the sight of a musical chart or a blackboard exercise. They were too busy with goose-quills, arithmetic, geography, Latin, and rattan, to have time for anything else. If Charles ever joined in a Sunday psalm, or an anthem in honor of the Lord Mayor, we may be sure he did it "by rote" and not by note. Look at him as he bursts through those iron gates for a half-holiday! He is a hatless urchin, with long blue coat, yellow stockings, red leather girdle, and the white bands of a parson. And, swinging from a red cord attached to his button-hole, behold a brass tablet! It is his "ticket of leave." His free shout is full of musical possibilities. Here is no stammering. The truth is, if Elia had been scientifically trained in melody, he might have found that, after all, he had "a reasonably good ear in music."

This brings us to an important point,—namely, that it is nature's intention that everybody should sing, and that side by side with the reading of words the reading of scales should be taught. Experience has proved that, wisely taught, the latter art may be acquired as early, easily, and surely as the former. The possession of skill in interpreting the language of musical notation—skill to read with imaginative thought ballads and operas as we do poems and novels—would certainly greatly increase the sum total of human enjoyment, and give a strong impetus to vocal expression.

But, though "cabined, cribbed, confined" by artistic criticism, "bound in to saucy doubts and fears" of personal gifts and possible ridicule, singing asserts itself as the birthright of the human race. The child sings in the nursery; the street-Arab sings high and clear above the squalor of life; the sailor sings at his ropes through calm and storm; the blacksmith sings at his forge, while his daughter may sing in the village choir, and his wife in paradise. Nations resolve themselves into anvil choruses. We have the sober "God Save the Queen," the mad "Marseillaise," the rollicking "Yankee Doodle," and the infectious "Dixie." Moreover, we are rhythmical by nature. Sidney Lanier affirms that our breath, under the natural direction of the lungs, falls into iambic pentameter, the metre usually followed in blank verse. With this metrical trend in respiration, and a complete

set of vocal organs awaiting use, it seems fair to say, Man was made to sing. A careful student of this subject has formulated a rule which he claims is broad enough to cover all exceptions:

Inability to sing in reasonably pleasant tones ought to be as rare as inability to see, hear, talk, or walk.

This statement seems to be scientifically sound, leaving, as it does, a loop-hole of escape for victims of such evils as defective vocal organism, false training, or frequent influenzas. We must congratulate ourselves that all people do not try to sing; and we must sometimes condole with ourselves over the people who do. Musical limitations cordially admitted, the argument may be summed up thus: It is nature's artistic intention that we sing. Any power is lost if not credited and developed. It is illogical to refuse cultivation to an endowment because it is not abnormally large when received. We might as well say, Let only the robust take physical training; let only mental superiority seek an education.

But the world is busy and critical, and, despite nature and logic, it will probably go on to the end of time engaging sporadic voices to do its singing.

Gertrude E. Wall.

JONATHAN HALE'S BOOK.

JONATHAN HALE was doubtless a small boy in the year 1734, for in a little leather-covered, much worn book there is written, in a childish hand, "Jonathan Hale His Book July the 22 Anno Domini 1734." This volume is, so far as I know, the only surviving evidence of the existence of its owner. There is no means of knowing who he was or where he lived, but internal evidence points strongly to the conjecture that he belonged to a pious New England family, who brought up their children in the fear, if not in the love, of the Lord.

Edification seems to have been the sole end sought in children's books at the period in which the unfortunate Jonathan was sent into the world: the volume which friends kindly provided for the instruction of his infant mind would scarcely be considered food for babes in this generation. The title of this lugubrious work is "A Token for Children. Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children. By James Janeway."

In the preface, containing directions to children, Mr. Janeway says, "Dost thou love to be taught good things? Come, tell me truly, my dear child, for I would fain do what I can possibly to keep thee from falling into everlasting Fire. They which Lie must to their Father the Devil into everlasting burning; they which never pray, God will pour out his wrath upon them; and when they beg and pray in Hell Fire, God will not forgive them, but there they must lie for ever. And are you willing to go to Hell to be burned with the Devil and his Angels? O, Hell is a terrible place, that's worse a thousand times than whipping."

Poor Mr. Janeway! Doubtless he had a genuine love for children, and suffered anguish of heart in thinking of the myriads of infants that were being plunged into the lake of fire and brimstone. And poor little Jonathan! Did he try to follow the counsel of this holy man to "get by thyself into the Chamber or Garret, and fall upon thy knees, and weep and mourn," and did he lie awake nights weeping over his sins and fearing lest his soul was eternally lost and he was soon to writhe in everlasting fire? When he fell asleep, did he dream that the devil was about to impale him upon a pitchfork and cast him into the burning lake, and thereupon wake screaming, to the pious satisfaction of his parents, who regarded his distress as gratifying evidence of a conviction of sin?

The models of youthful piety whose lives are recorded in Jonathan's book would be imitated with no small difficulty by normal children. Much weeping appears to have been considered an indispensable accompaniment to juvenile piety. Of one child "eminently converted between eight and nine years old," we are told that after hearing a sermon upon the text "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," she became "so exceeding solicitous about her soul, that she spent a great part of her days in weeping and praying, and could scarce take any rest day or night for some time together." After this she was often "full of tears," and "spent her whole time either in praying, reading, or instructing at her needle." She spoke little, but when she did, we are told, "it was usually spiritual." This child was removed from a world which had indeed been to her a vale of tears when she was fourteen years old.

Another example is that of a babe "admirably affected with the things of God when he was between two and three years old." Before he could speak plain, he also "would be crying after God." At the same early age "he could not endure to be put to bed without family duty." He would kneel down and with "great patience and delight continue till duty was at an end, without any expression of being weary." There is an aptness in the frequent use of the word duty for prayer, since the merit of that exercise seems to have been regarded as proportioned to its length. In this respect there does not appear to have been such a wide difference, after all, between these shining examples of youthful piety and the heathen who believe they shall be heard for their much speaking.

This same child was in the habit of groaning and weeping so during "duty" that he was sometimes heard by the neighbors. He was fond of discoursing about the nature and offices of Christ and the mysteries of redemption. His infant mind found difficulty in comprehending the resurrection of the body, but he admitted that nothing was impossible with God. Immediately after this triumph of faith he was taken ill, and died when he was five or six years old.

A little girl when she was about four years old used to spend much time "in tears upon her knees." She was greatly troubled over the sins of other children, and was always ready to counsel them. When she saw some laughing whom she judged to be wicked, "she told them

that she feared they had little reason to be merry." When they not unnaturally asked if they might not laugh, she answered, "No, indeed, till you have grace. They who are wicked have more need to cry than to laugh."

Another infant prodigy began to "suck in divine things with no small delight" at a very early age. When five years old he reproved his mother for her sorrow over the death of a brother. Before he was six he surprised his master by his precocity when, in answer to the question put to the school "whether God had a mother," he replied, "No; as he was God he could not have a mother, but as he was man he had." He too never neglected the admonition of other children. Once, hearing a child speak profanely, "he was so transported with zeal that he could not forbear falling upon him to beat him." He was not content merely to learn the catechism himself, but insisted upon the servants learning it, and watched them strictly to see that they kept the Lord's day. "When he perceived his brother or sisters pleased with their new cloaths, he would reprove their folly, and when his reproof signified little, he would bewail their vanity." He entreated his mother not to gratify the pride of his brother and sisters, and told them "how little reason they had to be proud of that which was their shame; for, said he, if it had not been for sin we should have had no need of cloaths." He constantly urged the necessity of a holy life upon his school-fellows, and spoke much to them upon the text "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." This was when he was between seven and eight years old. His brother and sisters and near relations he "would put upon their duty and observe them whether they performed it or not." This "elect vessel" was graciously removed by Heaven from his much enduring family at the age of eleven.

There are in all twenty-two examples of infant godliness recorded in the "Token." Did Jonathan read daily about the saintly children who died young, and try to emulate them? Or did he defiantly neglect his good book, except on Sundays when his parents compelled him to read it, and did he refuse to weep over his condition as a child of wrath, and become a hardened sinner? It would be interesting to know. I suspect the fact that his signature is appended to the admonitory preface is to be understood as a solemn covenant on his part to do his childish best to walk in the way pointed out,—that is, to spend his days in weeping and mourning. Poor child! he was indeed between Scylla and Charybdis. If he was not good, he was destined to the lake of everlasting fire. If he was too good, he must have thought himself in imminent danger of being removed from this sinful world in his infancy. Poor little Jonathan!

Edith Dickson.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

Cabot's Discovery
of North America.
By G. E. Weare.

Somewhat overshadowed by the Queen's Jubilee, still the celebration of John Cabot's discovery in North America is an historic event of the first importance, which has drawn to Bristol in England the attention of the Anglo-Saxon

race. From Bristol it was, in May, 1497, that Juan Cabotto with his son Sebastian sailed, under letters patent from King Henry VII., for the unknown seas to the west. He landed, in June probably, at some point on the American continent not yet determined, and thus gave to the claims of British sovereignty in North America a good foundation. It is this point which especially marks the present celebration in the eyes of Englishmen and Americans and has made timely the excellent and comprehensive—we may add the fascinating—book of Mr. G. E. Weare, of Bristol, author of much good literature on the ancient city of his residence. The book in question is entitled *Cabot's Discovery of North America*, issued by the J. B. Lippincott Company, and in the space of about three hundred handsome pages it gives every scrap of the rather scant biographical information about Cabot and his three sons, every document, in the original language and translation, relating to the two voyages which Cabot inaugurated, and an abundance of views of Bristol, which help to realize for the reader the conditions under which the momentous embarkations were made.

Besides this, Mr. Weare gives an exhaustive, but vastly interesting, account of the steps leading up to Cabot's enterprise made on the Continent and in England towards the discovery of the New World. Many tentative voyages were ventured, many traditions and myths arose and floated through Europe, before even Columbus was inspired with the rage of discovery. And it is possible that but for the fanciful and alluring stories of Marco Polo the actual landing in what was long thought to be the dominions of the Grand Khan of China would have been postponed many decades. The object in the mind of each adventurer seems to have been treasure, and John Cabot's report even of the rich store of fishes in the far-away waters was an element of enticement to king and commons.

So interesting are Mr. Weare's well stated and collated facts that it would be agreeable to devote much more comment to his admirable book; but it must suffice to add that it contains four or five valuable maps which alone would enrich any publication in which they appeared. These are Behem's Terrestrial Globe; Toscanelli's map used by Columbus in his first voyage; the North American portion of the so-called Cabot *Mappemonde* of 1544; Juan de la Cosa's map of 1500, and the Cantino map of 1502.

Inspired by the celebration of a great historic event, this volume becomes a permanent addition to history.

Transition. By the
Author of A Super-
fluous Woman.

There are few things more cryptic than a woman's impulses, and when the woman is over-educated at Vassar or at Girton the eccentricities of her career often know no bounds.

Such a woman is the Miss Honora Kemball of this strong novel, *Transition*, described in the report of the Cambridge Classical Tripos as "Women. First Class : Kemball, H., Girton (equal to 6). Second Class : none." Miss Kemball graduated first without a second, and was the talk of the town. Her college career was thus ended, and she returned to the rectory of her aged father a rare classical scholar but an inexperienced woman whose aim in life was to ameliorate the world. She drifted into many isms and ologies among London faddists, and fell out with the man for whom she felt a respect, almost a tenderness, because he could not follow her in her wild theories and madder practices. Lester Lyttleton was himself a radical, but he had the masculine sanity which Honora lacked. Honora was much influenced in her opinions by Lucilla Dennison, who carried her views so far into practice as to run away with the anarchist d'Auverney. Gradually the man and the woman around whose fortunes the story revolves come together, and the unusual plot develops as the most exacting reader could wish it. *Transition* appears in the paper covers of *Lippincott's Series of Select Novels*, and is one of its most interesting issues.

LEARNING TO COOK



For
Beginners
or
Experts

Cleveland's Baking Powder

DOROTHY'S INQUIRY.—Dorothy has a baby brother who has recently been ill with the coming through of his first teeth. I think he has the baldest head I ever saw on an infant. It has caused Dorothy great anxiety. She stood at the mother's knee one day, gently patting the little head.

"Be careful, Dorothy," said the mother. "You know poor little brother is sick. He is cutting his teeth."

Dorothy patted the bald head reflectively.

"Mamma," she said, "is it going to make him sick when he cuts his hair?"
—*Washington Post.*

HAUGHTY CHINA.—In the message sent by the Empress of China to King George III. appears this passage:

"The stores of goods at the Celestial court are plenteously abundant. There is nothing but what is possessed, so that there is really no need for the produce of outer barbarians in order to balance supply and demand. However, as the tea, silk, and porcelain produced by the Celestial court are indispensable objects to the different states of Europe and to thy kingdom, for this reason we have in our grace and commiseration established the foreign hongs at Macao, in order that all daily needs may be duly supplied and every one share in our superfluous riches. But now thine envoys have made considerable demands over and above what is provided by fixed precedent, in such wise as to run seriously counter to the principle of recognizing the bounty of the Celestial court to distant men and its nurturing care of the different barbarians. Moreover, the Celestial court exercises a controlling supervision over all countries and is benevolent to each in an equal degree. For instance, those trading in Canton province do not come from the kingdom of England alone. If they were all to come clamoring in the same way and wantonly to pester us with requests impossible to concede in this style, is it to be supposed that we could always go out of our way to grant them?

"Remembering, however, that thy kingdom occupies an obscure corner in the distant wilderness and is far removed from us by ocean upon ocean, also that thou art naturally unversed in the political etiquette of the Celestial court, we for this reason commanded our ministers to make all this plain to thine envoys, instruct their minds, and dismiss them back to their country. But, fearing that thine envoys on their return home may fail to present matters thoroughly to thee, we again take up their requests one by one and prepare these further commands for thy particular instruction, opining thou wilt be able to grasp our meaning."—*Nineteenth Century.*

"ON SATAN'S KNEES."—A little girl of five or so was much puzzled on hearing the lines of the old hymn,—

And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

"What ever," she asked, "did they want to sit on Satan's knees for? I'm sure I should not like to sit on Satan's knees at all. And why should he tremble, if they were so little?" This is a delightful bit of childish misunderstanding, and is half pathetic in its suggestion of how we wander when searching for the meanings of our hieroglyphics.—*National Review.*

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JAMES G. BATTERSON,
President.

JOHN E. MORRIS,
Ass't Secretary.

ECLIPSES both of the sun and of the moon have been of great value in chronology. Thus, for instance, a great battle between the Medes and the Lydians, during which a total eclipse of the sun occurred, is fixed by that fact as having taken place in the year 610 B.C.

PROUD OF HIS BALD HEAD.—“Pardon me, sir, but could I occupy just about a minute of your time? I would like to show you something that I know you will be glad to see.”

Without waiting for permission, the young man with a sallow complexion and a hand-satchel thrust a bottle under the nose of the bald-headed man.

“Now, sir,” he continued, “you are a public official, and the public sees a good deal of you, and the public realizes that you are quite bald, sir. I have something here that I will guarantee to restore your hair if you will permit me to treat you. It shan’t cost you a cent for medicine or treatment, and all I ask is that you will commend my medicine to your friends if I succeed. When they see a luxuriant growth of hair on your head and ask what you used, you can tell them McCracken’s Peerless Borax Hair-Restorer and Scalp Renovator.”

“Then you want to use my bald head for advertising purposes. Is that it?” queried the official.

“Well, yes; that’s right.”

“Does it appear to offer advantages as an advertising medium?”

“Well, yes.”

“Then what will you pay a square inch to paint your advertisement on my head in letters of any size, design, or color? Or, if you prefer, you can use it for posters or stickers. What do you pay for good advertising space?”

“I hardly think—”

“And say, I have half a dozen bald-headed friends. I think I could buy up their space for you if you will give me a commission.”

“But I want to make the hair—”

“I am sure you will get better returns than fence advertising, hand-bills, or newspapers. I’ll guarantee you a circulation among two thousand five hundred friends, three thousand five hundred more acquaintances, five thousand people who know me by sight, and twenty thousand strangers, every day.”

“Well, I see I can’t do—”

“I wish you’d think that over and make me an offer. I’m proud of this head.” But the young man had gone.—*San Francisco Post*.

IT HAD A DIFFERENT RING.—“As a new woman,” he said, “I suppose you will object to the wedding-ring as a symbol of man’s tyranny.”

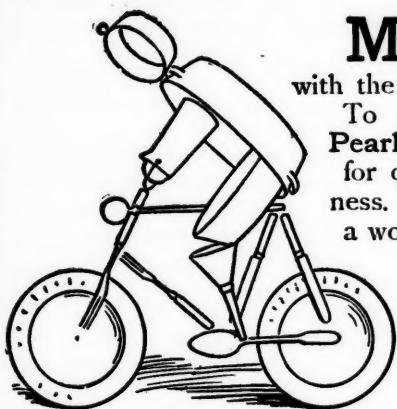
“Of course I shall,” she replied. “Under no circumstances would I consent to wear such a thing. It is not essential to a marriage, and it stands for all that is objectionable in the marriage relation.”

“And on the same theory,” he continued, “I suppose you will refuse to wear an engagement-ring also.”

“Well, no,” she answered, slowly and thoughtfully. “That’s a very different matter.”

“But theoretically it—”

“There is no use arguing,” she interrupted. “I don’t care what it is theoretically. Practically it is very often a diamond, while the wedding-ring is only plain gold, and that makes all the difference in the world.”—*Chicago Post*.



Make haste

with the dishes, if you're going out.

To get through quickly, take Pearline and water. Not only for quickness but for thoroughness. Pearline cuts the grease in a wonderful way. Less time and less work in washing dishes, pots and pans, and all the kitchen things.

Pearline makes clean wheeling, too. Nothing like it to get rid of grease, mud,

dirt, and grime on clothes and hands, or for cleaning up generally. It's an excellent chain lubricant. Keep a tin can or bottle of it in the tool-bag.

503

Millions ^{NOW} USE Pearline

PROVIDENT LIFE AND TRUST CO.

OF PHILADELPHIA.

Attention is directed to the new Instalment-Annuity Policy of the Provident, which provides a fixed income for twenty years, and for the continuance of the income to the widow for the balance of her life, if she should survive the instalment period of twenty years.

In everything which makes Life Insurance perfectly safe and moderate in cost, and in liberality to policy-holders, the Provident is unsurpassed.

SICKNESS AMONG CHILDREN is prevalent at all seasons of the year, but can be avoided largely when they are properly cared for. *Infant Health* is the title of a valuable pamphlet accessible to all who will send address to the New York Condensed Milk Company, New York City.

SIR EDWARD CREASY declares that on the result of the battle of Marathon depended "the whole future progress of human civilization."

THE CAUTIOUS YOUTH.—In the old days he would have rushed to his fate blindly, but the new woman has made the new man somewhat more cautious than he used to be in the old days.

She could see by the way he fidgeted around in his chair that he had made up his mind to come to the point that evening, but desired to look a little way into the future first.

"Sary," he said, abruptly, after a rather painful silence, "have ye any bloomers?"

"Nary bloom," she replied, promptly.

"Ever expect to git any?" he persisted.

"I never had no hankerin' fer pants," she returned.

"Sorter reckon that yer husband kin look arter everythin' in the pants line, do ye?"

"I wouldn't have a man thet couldn't."

"Course ye wouldn't," he said, thoughtfully, and then he pondered the matter for a few minutes before continuing.

"Hev ye any idee thet ye know more about politics than me?" he inquired, at last.

"What d'ye s'pose I know 'bout politics?" she retorted. "D'ye reckon there's any politics in the cook-book?"

He nodded his head approvingly.

"I ruther like the way ye talk," he said, "but ye don't seem to be up to the times. Most o' the women nowadays wants to do all the votin' and all the talkin'!"

"Tain't my style," she returned.

"D'ye think," he asked, becoming more earnest than ever before, "thet I know my own business better'n you kin tell it to me?"

"I wouldn't have ye sparkin' round here ef ye didn't!" she answered, shortly.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "Will ye marry me?" And so the matter was settled.—*Chicago Post*.

A LAWSUIT THREE HUNDRED YEARS OLD.—The little community of Burgsinn in the Bavarian district of Lower Franconia will shortly be able to celebrate the not over-enviable tercentenary jubilee of a lawsuit. On the 21st of June, 1596, this community brought suit at the Imperial Court, then sitting in Speyer, against the Barons von Thüngen, concerning a magnificent oak and beech forest of nearly eight thousand hectares in extent, which may to-day be estimated worth about two million marks, and which both parties claim as their own. It speaks volumes for the indomitable grit of these peasants, who, despite their poverty, through three long centuries, generation after generation, managed to put up among themselves enough money to carry on the suit, and who, in view of a recent decree, may ultimately consider themselves the *beati possidentes*.—*Paris Register*.

A SINGLE bee cannot collect more than a teaspoonful of honey in an entire season. So say the best authorities on bees and bee-keeping.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR A LIMITED TIME TO READERS OF LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE.

For 13 trade-marks from the outside wrappers of either *laundry size* DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX, or *laundry size* DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP, or 20 trade-marks from the *small size* DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX or DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP, we will give a portfolio entitled

"BEAUTIFUL PARIS."

This superb work of art is in 12 portfolios, 16 pages, $13\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches in each portfolio. Photographs full-page size that cost \$100,000. Nothing like them in the world. A fascinating history of a remarkable people, and a pictorial representation of the most splendid city of the earth. No house should be without the full set of 12 portfolios, and until the edition is exhausted, they will be given absolutely free to users of DOBBINS ELECTRIC and DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX SOAP on receipt of the 13 trade-marks of the *laundry size*, or 20 from the *small size* for each portfolio of 16 pages.

Save your outside wrappers of DOBBINS ELECTRIC SOAP and DOBBINS FLOATING-BORAX SOAP until you have 13 *laundry size*, or 20 *small size*, then cut out the trade-marks and mail them to us, and we will send you, postpaid, Portfolio 1. Another 13 or 20 trade-marks, as above, will entitle you to Portfolio 2, and so on until you have received the entire set of 12 Portfolios. In sending for Portfolios, *always* specify which number you received last. They were imported to be given for 20 and 40 wrappers, but for a limited time we reduced them (to all LIPPINCOTT readers) to 13 or 20 wrappers, as above. A handsome case bound in cloth, with gilt letters, to hold the 12 Portfolios, will be sent *free*, with Portfolio No. 12, to those who secure a complete set.

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MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP

has been used for over FIFTY YEARS by MILLIONS of MOTHERS for their CHILDREN WHILE TEETHING, with PERFECT SUCCESS. IT SOOTHES THE CHILD, SOFTENS the GUMS, ALLAYS all PAIN, CURES WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHŒA. Sold by Druggists in every part of the world. Be sure and ask for **Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup**, and take no other kind.

TWENTY-FIVE CENTS A BOTTLE.

A MICHIGAN ROMANCE.—An interesting story by Stanley Waterloo, also containing valuable information about the summer resorts in the North, will be mailed to any address on receipt of four cents to pay postage. Address D. G. Edwards, Passenger Traffic Manager, C. H. & D. Railway, Cincinnati, Ohio.

WHAT MADE IT YAWN?—Travel, which adds charm to the conversation of an agreeable person, sometimes renders a bore more tiresome than ever.

"And there I stood, Aunt Susan," said Miss Porter's slow-speaking but long-winded nephew, who had been droning on, about his summer in Switzerland, for some hours since the old lady's eyes had begun to droop in the lamp-light.—"and there I stood, Aunt Susan, with the abyss yawning in front of me."

"William," said Aunt Susan, speaking as one who has long kept silence, "was that abyss a-yawning before you got there, or did it begin afterward?"

NOT KLEPTOMANIA.—The lawyer knitted his brows. It was impossible for him to knit anything else. He never had learned how.

"This is a serious case," he said.

The woman shrugged her shoulders. She was a fashionable woman, and fashionable women always shrug their shoulders, especially in stories. Perhaps it is supposed to be *distingué*.

"Pooh! It is nothing," she said. "It has been done before,—many times before."

"You forget," persisted the lawyer, with the frankness of his profession, "that it is a penitentiary offence."

She laughed a musical little laugh, and again gave her shoulders an expressive shrug. The shoulders of many society women have so much expression, you know, that they have acquired possibly by appearing in public to such an extent.

These particular shoulders seemed to say, "You never saw anything like this in the penitentiary," and their owner supplemented this by saying, "Others have escaped."

"True," replied the lawyer, unravelling the brows he had knitted but a moment before, in order to see if he hadn't dropped a stitch, and then doing the work over again with more care, "but you must remember that they have a defence to make. They have alibis, or pleas of 'not guilty,' or other things, with which to go to trial, while you admit that you stole the goods."

"Such a disagreeable word!" she commented. "Why not say 'took them' instead? But never mind. I have my defence."

The lawyer looked surprised, but gratified.

"It is well," he said. "What is it?"

"Why, really," she replied, "I'm not just sure as to that. That's the point upon which I want you to advise me. I thought of pleading 'unconscious assimilation' at first as being something very new and fetching, but I understand it won't fit a case of this sort."

The lawyer didn't see how it possibly could.

"Then," she said, with decision, "it is a mere matter of deciding between kleptomania and somnambulism; but I confess it is a little difficult to choose. Now, if I only knew—"

"Yes?"

"If I only knew which was the most fashionable at this time, I'd be ready for trial, wouldn't I?"

Then, after a thoughtful pause, she added,—

"Kleptomania is getting to be disgustingly common, don't you think? Perhaps we'd better try somnambulism."—*Chicago Post.*

This Speaks for Itself.

PENNSYLVANIA INSURANCE DEPARTMENT,

HARRISBURG, MAY 24, 1897.

Mr. HARRY F. WEST,

President Penn Mutual.

DEAR SIR :

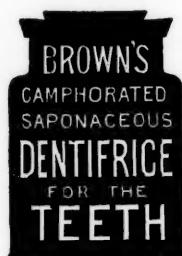
I regret very much that a previous engagement prevents acceptance of the kind invitation to the dinner of the Penn Mutual on Thursday evening, in celebration of the Company's Fiftieth Anniversary. I should have been much gratified to unite with you in an anniversary of so much significance, and of which all connected with your Company have such abundant reason to be proud.

Permit me to extend my most sincere congratulations, not alone to those of you who are immediately administering this great trust, but to all the policy-holders, who are beneficiaries of the intelligence, ability, and integrity with which the management of their business is distinguished. May they be as fortunate in their trustees of the future as they are in those of the present.

With sincere personal esteem, I am

Very truly yours,

JAMES H. LAMBERT.



THE BEST TOILET LUXURY AS A DENTIFRICE IN THE WORLD.

TO CLEANSE AND WHITEN THE TEETH,

TO REMOVE TARTAR FROM THE TEETH,

TO SWEETEN THE BREATH AND PRESERVE THE TEETH,

TO MAKE THE GUMS HARD AND HEALTHY,

USE BROWN'S CAMPHORATED SAPONACEOUS DENTIFRICE.

Price, Twenty-Five Cents a Jar.

For Sale by all Druggists.

THE MAPLE OF RATIBOR.—In the town of Ratibor, Prussia, stands one of the most wonderful trees in the world. It is not of gigantic size or the only representative of a species in which all the members except itself are extinct. It is a common maple, and shows a wonderful combination of nature and man's patience and ingenuity. The tree is only a few years over a century old, and during its entire life every limb and twig has been patiently trained by its owners. At present it looks like a living pagoda, the branches being so trimmed as to make it appear like a round tower with two stories. Each of these compartments is lighted by a series of eight windows, and the two "rooms" will each hold a dozen persons. The floors as well as the sides of these wonderful rooms are constructed of boughs, which are so skilfully woven together that the whole has the appearance of being some gigantic imitative freak of nature.—*St. Louis Republic.*

THE DECADENT FOOT.—"Why," asked the sophist, "can't the girls of to-day follow in their mothers' footsteps?"

The casuist gazed into space.

"I don't know," he mused. "Some say it's due to pushing a bicycle, and others to spring heel shoes."—*Detroit Tribune*.

UPS AND DOWNS OF FORTUNE.—Mr. Charles Noel Flagg, a New York artist, who has lived much abroad, tells some interesting stories of Bohemian life in Paris in the seventies. "Those were the days," says Mr. Flagg, "when Meissonier was Sir Oracle; when Bastien Lepage was fighting his way to recognition as a great painter and giving the first hint of a new school of brilliant color; when the men of Barbizon, at the end of their lives, were granted at last the place they had struggled for; when the fame of Claude Monet was the secret of a few enthusiasts. Conditions and ideas were different among the leaders from those which now prevail, but the rank and file struggled and starved, reviled and hoped, very much the same as to-day."

It has been said that in France fame has wings and that by a single great success she carries her votary to the top. Mr. Flagg illustrates the truth of this by relating an anecdote of a young Englishman named Hawkins. "He was so poor that he lived on bread alone, soaking his loaf, bit by bit, in two or three sous' worth of wine. He would sell pictures for five or six francs apiece, and that sort of grind went on for years. At last he painted a big picture, which all the boys thought so fine that they chipped in for a cheap frame and sent it to the Salon. It was a landscape, showing a graveyard, with children playing in the sunlight, but there was no cheap sentimentality about it: it was a strong, manly, brilliant thing. For bravado we made him set a big price on it,—something like twenty francs.

"Well, I had a picture in the Salon that year, so I went in on varnishing day and wandered up and down among the notables, looking for my picture. Suddenly I saw the sky of Hawkins's picture: that was all I could see for the crowd around it. And there was little Meissonier gesticulating and exclaiming, 'That's the best thing in the whole Salon,' and Bastien Lepage was pointing out this and that in it, and all the artists were admiring and chattering. And, do you know, he was the success of the year? The picture was bought that day for its full price, and the next day the carriages were lined up in front of his poor little studio, and he sold every rag in the place for any price he chose to set upon it. He managed to hold on to his success, too. It lasted so long as he lived."—HARRIET MONROE, in *Chicago Tribune*.

SHE DID.—"My dear madam," said the custom-house inspectress, "you must not blame me. You"—here she smilingly pointed to a pile of table-cloths, silk, kid gloves, etc.—"brought it all on yourself."—*New York Sunday Journal*.

ABOUT FINGER-NAILS.—The Japanese have some curious ideas about their finger-nails. One of them is to the effect that they must not be cut before starting on a journey, lest disgrace befall the person before he reaches his destination. Neither should they be cut at night, lest cats' claws should grow out. To throw nail-pairings into the fire is to invite some great calamity. If while trimming the nails a piece should fall in the fire, the person will soon die.

PERFECTION IN CAKE-MAKING.—Housekeepers frequently wonder why it is that they cannot make biscuit and cake that are light and palatable and that taste as delicious as the biscuit and cake made by their mothers and grandmothers, the delightful memory of which even to this day creates a sensation of pleasure to the palate. The trouble arises from the highly adulterated state of the materials they have to work with, particularly the cream of tartar and soda used to raise or leaven the food. Cream of tartar and soda that are now procurable for domestic purposes contain large quantities of lime, earth, alum, and other adulterants, frequently from five to twenty-five per cent., and consequently vary so much in strength that no person can tell the exact quantity to use, or properly combine them, to insure perfect results. From using too much or too little, or because of the adulterants in them, bitter, salt, yellow, or heavy biscuits or cakes are frequently made. These adulterants are also injurious to health.

All this trouble may be avoided by the use of the popular Royal Baking Powder. Where this preparation is employed in the place of cream of tartar and soda, its perfect leavening power always insures light, flaky, digestible biscuit, cakes, and pastry that are perfectly wholesome and free from the impurities invariably present when the old raising preparations are employed.

The Royal Baking Powder, we are informed by the most reliable scientists, is perfectly pure, being made from highly refined ingredients, carefully tested, and so exactly proportioned and combined that it never fails to produce the best and uniform results. An additional advantage in its employment comes from the fact that bread or other food made with it may be eaten while hot without fear of indigestion or any unpleasant results, while being equally sweet, moist, and grateful to the palate when cold.

HOTEL MOUNTAINDALE, MOUNTAINDALE, SULLIVAN COUNTY, NEW YORK.—Sullivan County is noted for its healthfulness, beautiful scenery, and wonderful climate, which is refreshing and cool the hottest days in summer. The Hotel Mountaintdale is renowned for its location, its excellent and liberal management, and the comfort and recreation that its equipment furnishes for the numerous guests who each year assemble at this delightful spot.

The hotel is located on a one-hundred-acre farm, which supplies fresh butter, milk, cream, poultry, fruit, and vegetables; with fish from the lake and the trout brook, which are situated directly in front of the hotel, and furnish boating, fishing, and bathing. Mr. Gustave Gosselin, formerly *chef* of the Union Club, New York, will, as usual, have charge of the culinary arrangements: this in itself promises a bountiful menu.

The casino, removed a short distance from the hotel, contains a dancing-room, billiard-rooms, bowling-alleys, etc.

Terms exceedingly moderate. Special rates to guests remaining throughout the season.

Mountaintdale is one hundred miles from New York City, and is easily and cheaply reached over the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad, foot of West Forty-Second Street, New York. Mr. George M. Lynch, owner and proprietor, can be addressed at either Mountaintdale or No. 1 Union Square, New York City.

THE MUMMY OF A PHARAOH.—The greatest discovery of mummies ever made in Egypt was in the year 1881, when the remains of thirty-nine royal personages were brought to light at Deir-el-Bahari, Thebes. One of these was proved to be the mummy of King Rameses II., the third king of the ninth dynasty and the Pharaoh of the Jewish captivity. This mummy was in a perfect state of preservation. The mummy-case itself was of sycamore wood, plain and unvarnished, and without a spot or stripe of paint, something reckoned as unusual. The case was, however, carved to represent Rameses in the position of Osiris. The crossed arms rested upon the breast. In the right hand was the royal whip, and in the left the royal book. The features were most delicately carved in the soft wood, and the whole was surmounted with the crown of upper and lower Egypt and surrounded by a carved representation of the uræus serpent. The name of Rameses was written in plain black characters upon the case, which bore no other text or representation whatever, strongly contrasting with the exaggerated dedications noted on almost all the other cases found in the same pit.

The mummy itself was carefully wrapped in rose-colored and yellow linen of a texture finer than the very finest India muslin. In the different folds of this linen several dried lotus flowers and leaves were found. In the folds of one of the bands which passed across the grave-clothes to keep them in shape was a folded papyrus bearing inscriptions which informed the reader that this, the mummy of Rameses II., was concealed in the pit where it was found at a time when a foreign army invaded Egypt. This quaint bit of information, which was probably written two thousand or two thousand five hundred years ago, is as plain as though it had been penned but yesterday.—*St. Louis Republic.*

WHERE THEY MET.—*Angry Wife (after a quarrel).*—“Seems to me we've been married about a hundred years. I can't even remember when or where we first met.”

Husband (emphatically).—“I can. It was at a dinner-party, and there were thirteen at table.”—*London Tit-Bits.*

ANTARCTIC ICEBERGS.—“The snow-fall of each year adds a new stratum to this ice cap, which is as distinguishable to the eye as is the annual accretion of a forest tree,” writes General A. W. Greely, U.S.A., describing in *The Ladies' Home Journal* “What there Is at the South Pole.” Thus in centuries have accumulated on Antarctica these snows, which by processes of pressure, thawing, and regelation have formed an ice cap that in places exceeds three thousand feet in thickness. Through the action of various forces,—that of contraction and expansion by changing temperature being perhaps the most potent,—this ice cap creeps steadily seaward and projects into the ocean a perpendicular front from one thousand to two thousand feet in height. The temperature of the sea-water being about 29°, the fresh-water ice remains unwasted, and the ice barrier ploughs the ocean bed until through flotation in deep water disruption occurs and the tabular berg is formed. These bergs are of a size that long taxed the belief of men, but it is now well established that bergs two miles square and one thousand feet in thickness are not rare. Others are as large as thirty miles in length and some nearly three thousand feet in thickness, their perpendicular, sun-wasted sides rising from two hundred to four hundred feet above the sea.”

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Same way when a person gets a bicycle which pleases him—he believes in letting others know about it. Just ask Stearns riders about Stearns bicycles. They are always proud of their mounts.

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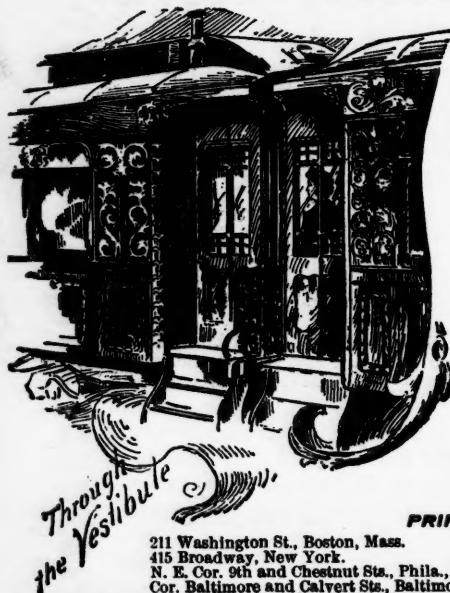
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